Film Quarterly

Volume 52, Number 4, Summer 1999

Interview with Arturo Ripstein

Ideology on the Beach

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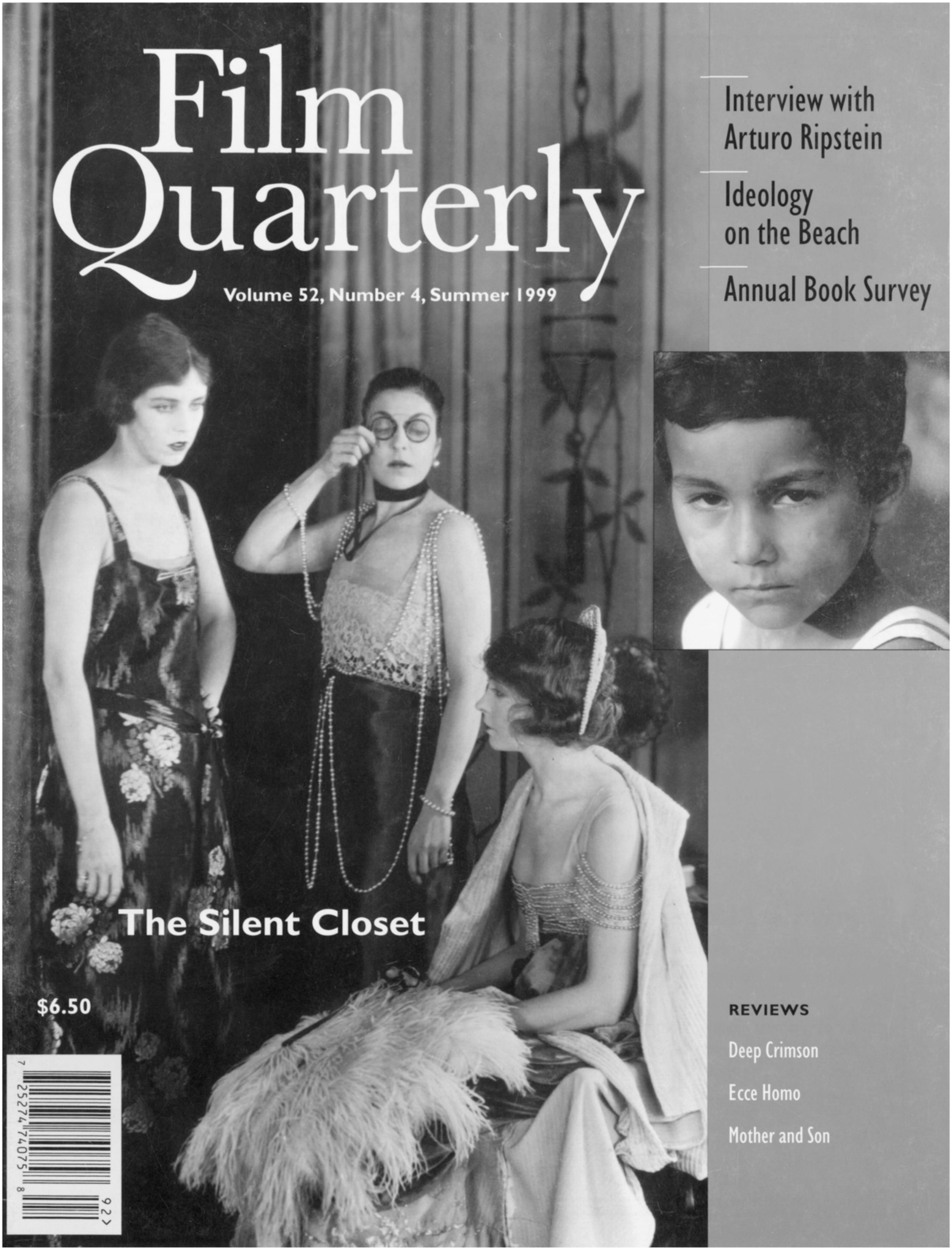

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Cover: Florence Short (center) in *Way Down East* (see page 24); inset: Džemko Karup, from *Ecce Homo* (see page 37).

Way Down East courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

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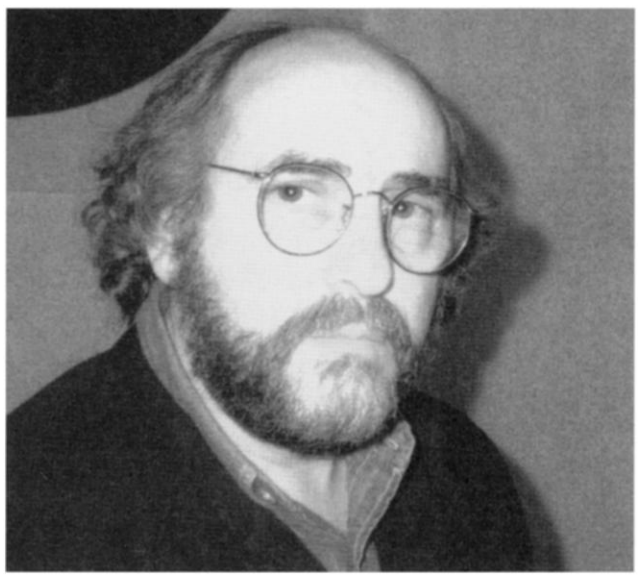
Sergio de la Mora

A Career in Perspective



An Interview with **Arturo Ripstein**

In April 1997 Arturo Ripstein, Mexico's most renowned film director, confronted Ernesto Zedillo in the Mexican president's first meeting with the state-supported film community since he took office in December 1994. On behalf of IMCINE (the state-funded Mexican Film Institute created in 1983) and its primary beneficiaries and administrators, Ripstein appealed to the president: "A country without film is a sad country." This less than positive view of Mexico today is also held by other major players in that country's art-film world, who are convinced, as is Ripstein, that without state subsidies the national art cinema would not exist. (Historically, Mexico's film industry has depended on state protection and promotion since the early 1930s.)

Inconsistent state film policies from one six-year presidential term to another together with a volatile economy radically alter the percentage of funds allocated to the cinema out of the total arts budget. Notwithstanding the global marketing success of borderlands culinary delights and magical realism such as *Como agua para chocalate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*, Alfonso Arau [1991]) and a handful of other film samplings, including *Danzón* (María Novaro [1990]), a "woman's picture" from the heavily promoted New Mexican Cinema (1989-94); the contemporary vampire thriller *Cronos* (Guillermo del Toro [1991]); and more recently the hyperstylized pseudo-documentary *¿Quién diablos es Juliette?* (*Who the Hell Is Juliette?*, Carlos Marcovich [1997]), in the last four years there have been surprisingly few Mexican films on the specialty film circuits and at international film festivals. In the United States, Mexican film has yet to secure a niche in an art circuit which demands that foreign films perform their nationality in the exotic spectacle of food and revolution.

Now along comes Ripstein's tragicomic murder love story, *Profundo Carmesí* (*Deep Crimson* [1996]), a sleek French-Mexican-Spanish co-production—distributed in the U.S. by New Yorker Films—laureled with three prizes at the 1996 Venice film festival, including best screenplay, and lauded by publications from the *New York Times* to *Sight and Sound*. *Deep Crimson* (the title refers to the nineteenth-century English writer Thomas de Quincey's insights on murder

El castillo de la pureza (*The Castle of Purity*)

and poetic passion) is in intertextual dialogue with other sources about the late 1940s "Lonely Hearts Club" murders of spinsters and widows carried out mostly in New England and the Midwest by the swindlers Raymond Fernández and Martha Beck. The best-known popular text on the Lonely Hearts murders is the low-budget, black-and-white cult classic *The Honeymoon Killers* (Leonard Kastle [1969]).

With *Deep Crimson* Ripstein breaks from his obsessions with the shadowy, enclosed, claustrophobic spaces of the family home and ventures out into the yellow, sun-bleached, and near empty landscapes of northern Mexico, though he continues his signature self-conscious predilection for tawdry and cluttered interiors and constant play with mirrors. Like Ripstein's previous films, *Deep Crimson* simultaneously undoes and acknowledges Mexican Hollywood-inflected genre conventions. The film's rich melodramatic excess exploits the international language of the *telenovela* (soap opera), historically Latin America's most exportable audiovisual commodity. In fact, melodrama is one of the important markers of this film's national specificity since Mexico's distinct subgenres of melodrama are informed by classic Hollywood narrative conventions while at the same time transforming them.

Ripstein's early films focused on authoritarian, ineffective, or absent patriarchs; since embarking on a partnership with the screenwriter Paz Alicia Garcíadiego, which began in 1985, Ripstein has turned his attention to mothers. *Deep Crimson* is no exception. Garcíadiego's lush screenplay turns Martha Beck, a single mother of two, into the fat, controlling nurse Coral Fabré (played by the effusive, opera-trained actress Regina Orozco), who nurtures her fantasy life with the movies and romantic male pin-ups. Raymond Fernández appears as Nicolás Estrella (Daniel Giménez Cacho, who often plays neurotic sex fiends), a Mexican born of Spanish parents who cites Cervantes and lisps to better seduce. Coral gives her children away to an orphanage in order to join Nicolás in love, swindling, and murder. These are wounded and narcissistic romantics rather than the abstract monsters of Hollywood serial-killer movies. Much more than a drawn-out fat joke or a sadistic narrative played out against

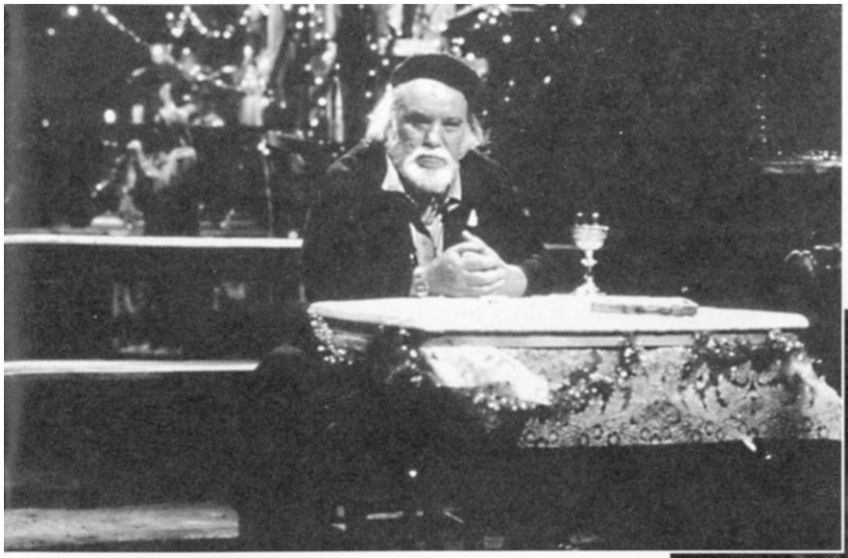
Right: *El lugar sin límites* (*The Place Without Limits*)
Below: *El Santo Oficio* (*The Holy Office*)

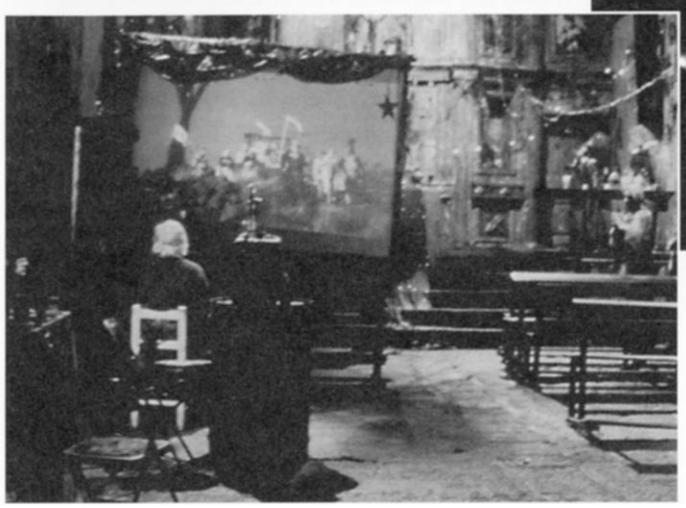
vulnerable women, *Deep Crimson*, like previous Ripstein-Garcíadiego collaborations, cruelly forces the willing spectator to witness the destruction of one of our most sacred values—the nurturing nuclear family—by the power of obsessive, passionate, mad love.

Ripstein's iconoclastic approach to the conventions of the Mexican family melodrama have made him a controversial figure in Mexican film. Deliberately working against a long tradition of celebrating and idealizing the family, and specifically paternal and maternal figures, he examines authoritarian family structures, machismo, homophobia, and other forms of intolerance. His elegant, visceral, and ferociously cathartic films follow his dictum that "art should be convulsive." *Village Voice* critic J. Hoberman has described Ripstein as the master of the feel-bad movie. Ripstein's films irreverently work against the conventions of classic Mexican melodramas, focusing on desperately needy, vulnerable, jealous, ambitious, and self-destructive characters trapped in dysfunctional families and in impossible and doomed love. Above all, Ripstein's characters are marginalized loners burdened with guilt and suffering. His films are often deliberately and simultaneously painful and pleasurable to watch: long takes and the often uncomfortably voyeuristic and detached gaze of the camera impassively witness characters driven by ideals of perfection, ambition, and disingenuous fantasies of love taken to their masochistic and suicidal extremes. Ripstein's films in collaboration with Garcíadiego have become increasingly pessimistic and nihilistic—to the point where suicide is a recurring option for their characters.

Ripstein's career spans three generations of filmmaking. His filmography includes 23 feature-length films to date and a score of short and medium-length projects, in narrative, experimental, and documentary genres. A third-generation Mexican Jew of Polish and Russian descent, Arturo Ripstein (b. Mexico City, 1943) is the son of veteran film producer Alfredo Ripstein, Jr., founder of the prominent production company Alameda films in 1948. His mother, Frieda Rosen, is originally from El Paso, Texas, one important reason why Ripstein speaks such good English.

At the age of 21 Ripstein made his directorial debut with the Western *Tiempo de morir* (*Time to Die* [1965]), whose screenplay was written by Carlos Fuentes and





El evangelio de las maravillas (Divine)

Gabriel García Márquez. The film's formal experimentation and critique of the representation of competing honor-bound systems of masculinity positioned him as one of the leading directors of the first wave of the New Mexican Cinema, the first of three industry- and state-led efforts to revitalize the national film industry. Since his first film, Ripstein has collaborated with other leading Latin-American literary "boom" and "post-boom" novelists and poets. He gained international attention with the grotesque family melodrama *El castillo de la pureza* (*The Castle of Purity* [1972]), co-written with José Emilio Pacheco, and later with the commercial and critical success of the gay cult classic prostitution melodrama, *El lugar sin límites (The Place Without Limits* [1977]), co-adapted with Manuel Puig (not credited) from José Donoso's novel. Ripstein's other notable early period genre films include *El Santo Oficio* (*The Holy Office* [1973]), the first film to explore the persecution of Jews in Mexico during the Inquisition, and *Cadena perpetua* (*In for Life* [1978]), a police thriller, cowritten with Vicente Leñero, focusing on the Mexican political system's institutionalized corruption.

Ripstein's work matured in his partnership with the screenwriter Paz Alicia Garcíadiego, who has written all his films since their collaboration began, including *El imperio de la fortuna* (*The Realm of Fortune* [1985]), a remake of the late *ranchera* (rural musical family melodrama) classic *El gallo de oro* (*The Golden Rooster* [1965]); *La mujer del puerto* (*Woman of the Port* [1991]), an iconoclastic remake of the 1933 prostitution melodrama; *Principio y fin* (*The Beginning and the End* [1993]), based on Egyptian Nobel Prize–winner Naguib Mahfouz's novel; and *La reina de la noche* (*The Queen of the Night* [1995]), a controversial tragedy loosely based on the last decade in the life of Lucha Reyes (1906–1944), one of the most prominent performers of Mexican vernacular music and a pioneer in internationalizing the *ranchera.* His most recent films are *El evangelio de las maravillas* (*Divine* [1997]), about a millennial religious sect in Mexico, and an adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's novella *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (*No One Writes to the Colonel* [1998]).

His lesser-known work includes the feature-length documentary *Lecumberri: El palacio negro*

(*Lecumberri: The Black Palace* [1976]), on the notorious, state-of-the-art turn-of-the-century Mexico City prison (recently converted into the National Archive). He has also directed a number of short and medium-length documentaries, including a film on Luis Buñuel, *El náufrago de la calle de la Providencia* (*The Castaway of Providence Street* [1971]), and *La causa* (*The Cause* [1976]), on Chicano farm workers labor union activist César Chávez. For his bread and butter, Ripstein has directed *telenovelas* as well as documentaries for television, including *Hombre con guitarra* (*Man with Guitar* [1997]), a 30-minute documentary on the leading Cuban singer-composer Silvio Rodríguez, which he completed for Spanish television.

Ripstein has been the recipient of numerous international awards and tributes and was one of two auteurs (along with Jaime Humberto Hermosillo) whose oeuvre was highlighted in the touring film series The Mexican Cinema Project, comprised of 100 new English-subtitled classic and contemporary Mexican films organized during the early part of the 1990s by IMCINE and the Film and Television Archive at the University of California, Los Angeles.[1]

SERGIO DE LA MORA: *With* Deep Crimson, *did you and Paz Alicia set out to film a remake of* The Honeymoon Killers? *And what attracted you to this project?*
ARTURO RIPSTEIN: No, my film is not exactly a remake. I knew about the murder case in 1965, many years before I saw the Leonard Kastle movie, which I liked very much.

I like crime stories. They are quite perfect because they have a beginning, a middle, and an end, contrary to reality, which doesn't have any structure. I like to read about such things. One day Paz Alicia and I decided it would be a good story to adapt to a Mexican context. There have been relatively few case studies of serial killers in Mexico adapted to the screen.

Deep Crimson is more than a crime story, it is about more than serial killers. It is a strange love story. It's a story about lovers who kill, not about killers who become lovers. *Deep Crimson* is a movie that takes place in different geographic locations. The characters have no set itinerary; they carry out motiveless crimes that occur across distances. It is not really a road movie. We had to isolate the women victims geographically. In Mexico, families are very different than in the U.S. In Mexico, some things wouldn't happen; getting swindled by a couple of psychopaths would be more complicated there. Generally speaking, in Mexico there is always the family that would come to your defense.

In past interviews you've commented on your freedom in selecting projects, even though you've noted that your films have no audience and no commercial interests to serve. Does this still hold true?
At least morally it does hold true. I don't have to cater to anybody so I feel more or less free to do what I want given the limits of our industry and the possibility for the film to recuperate the production costs.

How would you situate your work in relation to Mexican film history, particularly classic and contemporary Mexican filmmaking?
I was born into the Mexican filmmaking industry, my father was a very important commercial film producer. He took me to the movie studios as a reward when I behaved well. I was fascinated from the first time I went. I remember barely walking and being at the studios. I grew up watching the stars of the Golden Age making their films, the great directors as well as the actors and actresses who were actively involved in film at that time. I saw them all, of course; production was magnificent and work was abundant. I'm talking about the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s.

Before I was 15 years old, I decided I wanted to be a film director. My father took me to see *Nazarín* (1958), by Luis Buñuel, which was an absolute detonator in my life. I knew Buñuel because he and my father shared a passion for guns and went shooting together. I went to see Buñuel at his house a few days after I saw *Nazarín*. I had made up my mind that I wanted to be a director. I told him, "I saw your film and I want to be a director just like you, and I want you to take care of me. . . ." At that point he slammed the gate in my face. I was quite stunned. A couple of minutes later he opened the gate again and said, "Okay, come in." So he took me into his living room and he mounted a small 16-millimeter projector and he showed me *Un chien andalou* (1928), twice. He said, "These are the kind of films I make. Do you still want to be a director?" I said, "More than ever." He was gracious enough to take me under his wing.

From then on, while I went to school, I started to work on film as an assistant in many capacities, including as an actor because I wanted to see what it was like to be on the other side of the camera. I worked with cameramen, editors, sound technicians; I made the rounds. I ended up as an assistant with a few directors who I enjoyed working with, including Chano Urueta. I saw the work of many others, especially Emilio Fernández, whom I liked a lot. He was kind enough to be my *padrino* [godfather] during my first movie. But before I made my first film, I told my father that I wanted

to be a movie director and my father went nuts because filmmaking is a very unstable profession and it's very hard. He told me I had to be self-supporting before I started movies. So I had to study law for a couple of years and then history. I was quite fed up with going to school because I just wanted to make movies.

At the same time I was taking film classes at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, which is where I got my theoretical training. I read every book I could get my hands on and naturally I saw every movie that I could, which is one important way to learn how to make movies. I was absolutely fascinated by John Ford, Fritz Lang, Luis Buñuel, Akira Kurosawa, and a bunch of others. I was also under the aegis of the French New Wave. My influences from Mexican movies were primarily Emilio Fernández and Fernando de Fuentes.

How would you describe Buñuel's influence on your films?

Basically his influence wasn't technical. He didn't teach me how to make movies. I was his assistant on *El ángel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel* [1962]) and my job was not just driving him to work and carrying his briefcase—I also asked him questions about why he did certain things one way or the other. He let me stay because I was impertinent enough to keep asking him and pushing him; I was 18 years old at the time and you can't help but be impertinent at that age. I wanted precise answers to my questions. I didn't learn technically from him because he didn't talk about that. He always said he wasn't very adroit in that aspect of filmmaking, which was false because he was a very competent director. I learned morally, aesthetically, ethically to never betray yourself. To try to do the film that you really have in your heart and follow it till you can fulfill it at least as much as your capabilities permit. And of course, with Buñuel I share a love for the grotesque, the absurd, and the paradoxical. Buñuel is, we could say, the only foreign filmmaker who has really captured the true essence of Mexico. Every other filmmaker of foreign origin, from Sergei Eisenstein to John Ford, who has gone to Mexico has been baffled by the picturesque and photogenic qualities of my country.

How would you describe your aesthetic philosophy and what's behind your increasing use of long takes in your films?

I do not belong to any aesthetic school, I never have. That is why I wasn't a political director in the 1960s or whatever was in vogue. I'm alone. I do not believe in fraternities, societies, or pacts. I tread the path that I do not knowing where I'm going. I delve into realms that I've never been to and that I do not know. So that's why I'm sort of a loner and do not belong to a school. I use whatever is available to tell a story better.

I have found lately that my voice is clearer with very long takes. By breaking from the tradition of montage and eliminating point-of-view shots, long takes help develop my characters and create the atmosphere I want to convey. Long takes help me convey what I believe is the essence of cinema and that is photographing things in time.

How would you describe your relationship to the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s New Mexican Cinemas?

I've always been part of all this. I started my work as a director in 1965 so that by 1972, when I directed my third movie, *El castillo de la pureza,* I was a ripe man of 28 with a few years of experience. The generation I belong to always had the idea that one had to destroy the status quo, one had to destroy tradition. Mexico is a country with great gaps in its history, so tradition has to be continually reinvented. We took upon ourselves the task of making certain kinds of films which would destroy our cinematic tradition and build a new one.

I've always been there in the line of fire with a few other directors who have painfully continued directing in a very difficult country and in a very difficult career. My relationship to these new cinemas has been out of tenacity; I just have to go on and on shooting. In Emilio García Riera's prologue to the book that he wrote about my work, I wrote the following epigraph, "Whosoever can live without making a movie, he shall not film at all."[2] I cannot live without making a movie so I just have to be tenacious.

Is Mexican cinema worst off now than when you started filming in 1965?

The industry is smaller. When I started filming, the industry produced some 90 films annually. Now only five or six are produced, so the difference is monumental. But in terms of quality, the percentage of good films being made annually is infinitely larger than ten years ago.

You've said that you do not consider yourself a political filmmaker in the sense of being socially committed? Could you elaborate?

When I was a young man being politically engaged was a major issue. My films are not derivative of a political situation or a political action. I've never tried to make a political issue more important than the narrative. I've always tried to make films about things that scare me or leave me in awe. Some of my contemporaries were

engaged in political action. I've always thought that engaged writers prefer politics to writing and I've always preferred filmmaking to politics. We can say that every statement is political in its broadest sense, so in that way my films are politically oriented. I will never impose my opinions on my story. Opinions are the most futile and changeable things that we have in life. I've always respected the story as a much more important part of my filmmaking.

You've worked with screenwriter Paz Alicia Garcíadiego on your eight most recent films. How would you describe your collaboration process with a writer?
I've been very fortunate to work with some of the best writers in Spanish. I always liked to collaborate with writers more than screenwriters because screenwriters in Mexico were a bit on the slower end of the race to make films. They were not really the thinkers of the stories that I wanted to tell. Professional screenwriters are a bit more morose. I have had wonderful screenplays in my hands from the novelists and poets I have worked with, but I can say without shame or fear of being wrong that the best things I've ever had in my hands have been Paz Alicia's. Similarly, Gabriel García Márquez calls her a monster talent and insists that she is the best screenwriter ever in Spanish. And he really knows what he is talking about.

Paz Alicia and I work together pitching ideas. When we first started to collaborate, I asked her to adapt Juan Rulfo's novella *El gallo de oro* and I was fascinated by how her screenplay, *El imperio de la fortuna,* turned out. We talk all the time about making a film about this or that and when there is an idea that sounds true, then we go ahead and develop it. Before she begins writing we discuss the project thoroughly, then she writes the whole screenplay; after that I read it and give her my comments and ideas. We then change it in order to adapt it to my filmic necessities. We work very closely together and we really have never had a professional quarrel. My work begins when her work is finished so we do not really interfere with each other, we collaborate. Paz Alicia comes to the shooting but she doesn't bother a lot, she gives her ideas.

I've always been a director who thinks that one has to surround oneself with the best people possible and let them do their job as well as they can. I've always thought that—many times, not always—four eyes see more than two. So whenever someone suggests a good idea I accept it because it is always a feather in my cap. The second aspect of our lack of professional quarrels is that I do not want to be a screenwriter and she does not want to be a director.

What brought you to La reina de la noche, *your project on Lucha Reyes, the 1930s and 1940s* ranchera *singer? What story were you and Paz Alicia trying to tell?*
The producer Jean-Michel Lacor went to see a parodic show that depicted the spectacles that Lucha Reyes used to perform. He liked the songs and Lucha's persona so he asked Paz Alicia to write the screenplay for an American director, who subsequently withdrew from the project because he thought that it would be very difficult to direct the film in Spanish if he didn't speak the language and he didn't know Mexico too well either. Lacor stayed on with the project as a co-producer and looked for a few directors. I was on hand and had read the screenplay so he offered it to me. I rewrote it with Paz Alicia in order to fit my filmic needs.

I did not want to make a film about a successful singer. I wanted to make a film about the long descent of a libertine woman to her death. I knew that Lucha Reyes had committed suicide and I really wanted to make the film about the suicidal relationship between her and her mother. Lucha Reyes was a very licentious woman in a period where this behavior, while not a threat, was also not an everyday occurrence. So I wanted to explore the path that a woman who had more or less everything follows toward her destruction, which is what I thought was most interesting about this character. That is also why in my film the songs are so fragmentary and so small; it is more a film about conflict than about singing or success.

The producer allowed me to make the film I wanted to make, although his ideas about the project were altogether different from mine. He wanted a musical where we saw the rise and fall of a big star. In my film we see the fall and downfall of a desperate woman. I wanted to make her a fascinating figure, a figure of reflection, a figure made out of flesh and blood. I wanted a woman who was strong and rough and absolutely fascinating, a woman of independent means no doubt, and a woman who took strong positions in life. I wanted to mythologize those aspects of Lucha. When you put together a whole life in two hours you are always mythologizing and in this case the choice was to mythologize her even more, to make her a reflection of a reflection and make her indeed bigger than life.

When I was growing up the only way to access sexuality was through brothels and cabarets. I grew up in the film industry, which was like an enormous, perpetual cabaret. So I cannot take my eyes off it; this circus is my life, cabarets are my life, and brothels were the beginnings of my sexuality; it was the forbidden, fascinating, wonderful place to enter and explore and never completely revealed its mysteries. Cabarets are

© Pamela Gentile Photography

Top: *La reina de la noche* (*Queen of the Night*)
Left: *El imperio de la fortuna* (*The Realm of Fortune*)
Above: Ripstein with Paz Alicia Garcíadiego, 1995

always dark and strange and mysterious. I grew up in these places so that is what I like and what is ingrained in my eyes and in my heart. I try to respect it and go to it as much as I can. I love the night, I love night people, I love the downtrodden, I love the licentious, I love the lecherous, I love the lonely and the lost.

So is that what makes you choose marginalized figures for so many of your films?
Not only marginalized, but losers, people in states of desperation, people at the end of their rope, sinners in the broadest aspect, and people who bear guilt in suffering and in despair. I think they make for wonderful, dark storytelling, and that is what I like most. It is the intensity of these characters that I enjoy so much. Normal people are not photogenic, not in my movies. Normal people are just bystanders or secondary figures. I like the great sufferers because they make for great storytelling. Great sufferers are ambiguous and mysterious and that is what art should ultimately be.

In three of your most recent films (La mujer del puerto, Principio y fin, *and* La reina de la noche), *suicide is a dominant motif and the family is represented as a destructive force. What motivates you to represent the family as you do?*
The family has always been a moving force in every one of my films from the very first to the last one. Family is, I think, a nucleus of destruction and of horror. Families can be very demanding and very castrating. Families can, of course, be a source of protection and serenity, but serenity and protection have a very high price. What I've tried to do is to demolish the basic values of certain bourgeoisie who believe that religion, family, and country are the most important factors one has. I believe in the freedom of the heart and of the mind that does not include these very closely knit nuclei. I try to tread on them and open up other possibilities. I didn't plan on making a triptych of suicide, of death, but it happened that way. In a poor filmmaking country like mine you cannot plan ahead, not like Ingmar

Above: *Principio y fin* (*The Beginning and the End*)
Right: *La mujer del puerto* (*Woman of the Port*)

Bergman in Sweden, who says, I'm going to make a triptych of suicide—and he can do it.

What attracted you to the project to direct a third remake of the classic 1933 prostitution melodrama La mujer del puerto?[3]

Paz Alicia and I always have a great big movie that we want to make. So there have been a few other movies that are called *películas de entre tiempo,* in-between-time films, until we get money to make our great big project. When we think about a script the first thing we consider is the possibility of it being feasible. We try to make films that are cheap, that don't require many actors or many locations, films that are possible. It is better to make a small film that is feasible than an enormous film that probably will never get produced. One day I said to Paz Alicia, Let's make a poor and miserable *La mujer del puerto,* because in the first version the leading character was a miserable whore in Veracruz but she still dressed in black silks and gloves up to the elbow, and other very strange things that never occur in brothels.

This film encompasses all my obsessions with people of the night, brothels, enclosed places, and this mysterious aspect of life which is sex. I do not like sex as sport. I like sex as a foreboding option of loneliness and suffering. So I thought that this film would help me rethink aspects of Mexican movies and rethink aspects of my night creatures. I talked to Paz Alicia about it and her reflection was that it was not very scary to make a film about incest in 1991 because incest in Mexico occurs in ordinary life and while it is not normal and is taboo in every society, it happens. Paz Alicia and I thought it would be perfect to create a completely different structure that would make the mother the central figure, the all-knower of the incestuous relationship between her daughter and son. So she developed the triangulated relationship and I developed the structure to tell the story from three points of view. We tried to convey one story that is complemented by three points of view; there are certain things that are told three times, and certain sequences that just fill in the gaps between one story and the other. It is like the making of a jigsaw puzzle. I wanted to make a complex and intellectual film. I wanted also to enter into the realms of sin in which we talk about sin as a reality; sin has to be paid for. But love is bigger than sin, it is colder than death, it is made of stronger stuff than the afterlife. I tried to enter into the realms of the mystery of love and sex in a small enclosed space where horrors happen everyday and they are just like life.

Would you comment on the film's happy ending and how it rewrites classic Mexican melodramas?

This is the most atrocious happy family ever depicted on film. It is about a co-proprietor of a brothel who lives with her ex-lover, who is now impotent because she gave him syphilis. They employ a happily married couple who are their daughter and son and who now have their own little daughter who is a mongoloid, and the woman is pregnant again. Despite this they go on performing their sexual acrobatics act. This is a perfect family and the ending is a comment on life, on my country, on reality, and on movies. My standpoint in this film is to destroy our tradition and build another which can be seen from a different end and from a different perspective. The film is not about looking at the family differently, it is about looking at the possibilities of life differently. There is not just one aspect of life that one should take care of, there are many. There is the optimistic and lovely side of life and there is the other side of the coin, which still isn't separate from the coin; the coin is the same one way or the other. I just enjoy watching the dark side of the heart of humans. I like the sin, the darkness, and the horror; this is what I enjoy. I like taking my revenge by making movies.

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See page 33 for a review of *Deep Crimson.*

Notes

1. Research copies of these films are held at the UCLA Film and Television Archive. For a complete list of titles see the catalogue, *The Mexican Cinema Project,* Chon A. Noriega and Steven Ricci, eds. (Los Angeles: UCLA Film and Television Archive, 1993).
2. See Emilio García Riera, *Arturo Ripstein habla de su cine con Emilio García Riera* (Guadalajara: Centro de Investigación y Enseñanza Cinematográficas, Universidad de Guadalajara, 1988).
3. The 1933 classic, *La mujer del puerto* (Arcady Boytler), employs the seduced and abandoned trope which characterizes the genre in Mexico to explain how the main character's descent into prostitution leads her to sleep with a sailor who turns out to be her long-lost brother. Upon discovering this, Rosario, the prostitute, commits suicide by throwing herself into the sea off a pier in the port city of Veracruz.

R. L. Rutsky

Surfing the Other

Ideology on the Beach

On the beach with Annette Funicello

From the late 1950s to the mid-1960s a wave of teen surfing films washed over the screens of drive-ins and theaters across the United States. At a time when many motion picture companies were struggling, these surfing or beach pictures were extremely popular with the increasingly youthful audiences for movies.[1] Films such as Columbia Pictures' *Gidget* series and American International Pictures' *Beach Party* films were designed to appeal to this youthful market, and they apparently did. *Beach Party* (1963) was a major hit, breaking box-office records in a number of locales; *Bikini Beach* (1964) was AIP's biggest-grossing film ever.[2] Annette Funicello was voted onto the exhibitors' annual top ten list of new stars, as were Sandra Dee and James Darren, the stars of *Gidget* (1959).[3]

Yet the beach films were very different from the melodramatic stories of troubled youth that had become the standard teen fare of the 50s. They were not teenage versions of the social problem film, built around such perceived dangers as hot-rodding, drugs, rock-and-roll, sexuality, and delinquency. Instead they featured, as *Beach Party* director William Asher once observed, "kids having a good time and not getting in trouble."[4] In most of the surfing films, audiences were presented with the comic and romantic escapades of white suburban teenagers having good clean fun at the beach.

Thomas Doherty has in fact described these kinds of films as examples of the "clean teenpic": "Fulfilling the best hopes of the older generation, the clean teenpics featured an aggressively normal, traditionally good-looking crew of fresh young faces, 'good kids' who preferred dates to drugs and crushes to crime."[5] Similarly, writing of the characters in the AIP *Beach Party* films, Gary Morris observes that

> The delinquents [of previous AIP teen films] are reborn in the beach movies as well-groomed, "normal" middle-class, surfing, singing "clean teens"—based largely on the image of lily-white youngsters seen on television shows like *Ozzie and Harriet* and *American Bandstand* and successful mainstream movies like Paul Wendkos's 1958 *Gidget*.[6]

For both Doherty and Morris, the middle-class, clean-teen normality of the beach movies is evidence of not only their superficiality, but of their attempt to offer a reassuring conformity as an escape from the troubling social problems of the times. In contrast to the teen problem and juvenile delinquent films of the 50s and the anti-establishment youth films of the late 60s, these films often seem to exist in a kind of historical time warp, a perpetual summer where the sun always shines and the surf is always up.[7] The turbulent social and political issues of the 60s never seemed to intrude upon the beach. As Morris notes, "The beach movies helped turn the beach into an exaggerated version of the suburban backyard."[8] Even when these films

did deal explicitly with issues of morality and responsibility, the resolution rarely seemed in question. No one could seriously doubt that Gidget would keep her virginity or that Moondoggie would return to college when the summer was over.

I have no quarrel with the way that Doherty and Morris characterize these films and their characters. Indeed, the idea that these films are conventional, white, and middle class, that their "normality" serves to deny social problems and to support ideological conformity, is hardly an astonishing revelation. What is more problematic, however, is the all-too-common assumption that notions of conventionality, conformism, and normality, of reassurance and escapism, serve to "explain" these films and their appeal. Morris, for example, explains the appeal of the *Beach Party* films by noting that their "subtext is *reassurance*" and observes,

> The films deny the growing split in the social fabric—evident from the Cold War (fear of nuclear holocaust), collapsing race relations, and drug use, the sexual revolution, and the emerging Vietnam War. They show teenagers as wistful, comic, conformist creatures, sexless and predictable, ultimately willing to carry on the traditions of consumer capitalism that they, as voracious consumers themselves, clearly benefit from.[9]

Here, although he will later observe that the form of these films tends to "subvert their own theme of comforting conformity,"[10] Morris comes perilously close to asserting that audiences for these films (apparently unlike cultural critics) are conformist cultural dupes. It is difficult to imagine, however, how teenage viewers of these films—or any viewers, for that matter—would take pleasure in identifying with such "sexless and predictable" conformity, particularly when Morris himself argues that the appeal of earlier AIP teen films was based on their depiction of crime, lurid sexuality, and the rejection of social conventions. If the appeal of the surfing films is based on escape from and reassurance about societal problems, how was it that those same problems apparently served as the basis for the appeal of those earlier teen films? Similarly, how are we to explain the apparently sudden shift in attitudes among youthful audiences between the comforting conformity of these films and the sexuality, violence, and anti-establishment sentiments of such popular youth-oriented films of the later 1960s as *The Graduate* (1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), and *Easy Rider* (1969)? Are we simply to assume that the teenagers who went to see *Beach Blanket Bingo* in 1965 were not the same young people who attended *The Graduate* two years later?

It scarcely seems credible that the attitudes of young moviegoers could change so dramatically in such a short time, first embracing social problems, then normality, then 60s counterculture. And while viewers often hold contradictory attitudes at the same time, the existence of such contradictions suggests that any desires for a comforting conformity must have existed alongside more nonconformist desires. Thus, viewing these films solely in terms of a reactionary reassurance and conformity is to ignore, as critics accuse these films of doing, the very ideological contradictions that these critics have seen as symptomatic of the time. To take but one example, one might well see the parodic and irreverent escapism of the *Beach Party* films as quite similar to that of *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), *Help* (1965), and *Head* (1968)—films that have often been cited as quintessential examples of the more nonconformist attitudes and filmmaking styles of the 60s.

In comparing beach films and Beatles films, I do not, of course, wish to collapse the differences between them, but merely to suggest that any reading that sees the beach films and their appeal simply as ideologically reactionary is, at best, partial and somewhat misleading. At worst, it involves an elitist distinction between the ideological conformity of the audiences for these films and the ideological awareness of the cultural critic.

Moreover, to see these films solely in terms of conformity, reassurance, or escapism is, I believe, to give far too much credence to the power and the pleasure of conformity. It overlooks the degree to which the appeal of these films also depends on elements of sexual, cultural, and ideological difference that can never be simply or entirely normalized. However much these films seem to affirm sexless romance and conformity to white, middle-class values and morality, it is also the case that sexuality, parodic irreverence, and nonconformity are crucial to their appeal. Indeed, in these films, the appeal of surfing and surf subculture is often based on the attractiveness of nonconformist, irreverent, and anti-bourgeois attitudes cobbled together from elements of teenage culture, rock-and-roll, bohemian philosophy, and beat culture and mixed with a heavy dose of parody. This appeal is, moreover, linked to the allure of non-Western cultures, derived in large part from surfing's own Pacific Island origins. Appropriated and submerged within the white, bourgeois milieu of the beach, these "other" elements are nevertheless crucial to these films' appeal. I want to examine how these anti-bourgeois and non-Western

elements inflect the beach or surfing films in order to show how cultural criticism has often neglected the appeal of nonconformity and otherness in "conformist" cultural products and how it has denied the cultural critic's own involvement, pleasure, and fascination in the object of study.

Vacations and Surf Bums

Most analyses of surfing or beach films duly note the extent to which they subordinate the surfing scene and culture to bourgeois notions of work, sexual morality, and monogamous relationships. The playful party atmosphere of the beach is therefore typically presented as a mere vacation, or as a last summer fling before adulthood. At the beginning of *Beach Party,* for example, Frankie and Annette (here, her character is named Dolores; in subsequent films she is known as Dee Dee) sing, "Vacation is here, beach party tonight," as they ride along the beach in an open-topped jalopy with their surfboards visible behind them. Similarly, *Muscle Beach Party* (1964) opens with Frankie and Dee Dee singing, "Easter vacation, we might stay until the middle of May. Grab your boards and follow us, surfer's holiday." Thus, the beach is represented as a place of freedom, where the responsibilities of work, school, and marriage are temporarily suspended in favor of the playful hedonism of parties, surfing, teenage sexuality, and romantic flings. In both *Beach Party* and *Muscle Beach Party,* Frankie is attracted to sexually provocative foreign women. These liaisons, of course, prove to be merely temporary flirtations. His inevitable reunion with Dee Dee—the "good girl" who does not engage in sex before marriage—affirms the more lasting values of love and marriage over the transient summer pleasures of casual sexuality. Thus, the freedom and live-for-the-present hedonism of the beach tend to be represented as childish or adolescent in contrast to the adult values of responsibility, work, and marriage.

Perhaps the most clearly articulated statement of these values occurs in one of the earliest of the surfing films, *Gidget,* where the acceptance of adult morality and responsibility is cast in terms of a conventional coming-of-age narrative: Gidget has to find a balance between the adolescent pleasures of the surfing clique and the adult responsibilities of "proper" behavior, especially proper sexual behavior. This distinction between adolescent and adult behavior is frequently represented in heavily gendered terms. Here, as in the *Beach Party* series and many other Hollywood films, the female lead is a good girl who serves to represent adult morality and responsibility—settling down, monogamy, family, work—in contrast to the irresponsible hedonism of the male characters. As Gidget's boyfriend, Moondoggie, puts it, "A girl like you—you're a real responsibility." Thus, the major narrative—and ideological—conflict of the film, for both Gidget and Moondoggie, is presented in terms of a choice between responsible behavior and the more free-spirited but irresponsible life of the surfers. This choice is highlighted in Gidget's abortive attempt to be hedonistic by having a fling with the Kahoona, as well as in Moondoggie's decision to take on the responsibility of a relationship with Gidget—and with it, returning to college and working for his father's business—rather than dropping out and traveling the world as a surf bum. There is, of course, no more doubt about the eventual outcome of these choices than there is that Frankie and Dee Dee will be reunited at the end of the *Beach Party* films.

But to read the surfing movies solely in terms of the way their narrative resolutions tend to uphold conformity to bourgeois values is to miss the point of these films, to misunderstand their appeal—and that of surfing more generally. For the attraction of the surfing films, and of surf subculture, is much less a matter of the reassuring pleasures of bourgeois conformity than of the thrill of nonconformity, the attraction of a certain difference, both sexual and otherwise. And while it may be true that the beach movies tend to recuperate that difference, to domesticate the otherness on which their appeal depends, there is no reason that film and cultural critics should follow them in this, similarly ignoring the extent to which the appeal of these films is based on the appeal of difference, of the other.

In *Gidget,* for example, the nonconformist attitudes of surf subculture are personified in the leader of the surfing crew (Cliff Robertson). The Great Kahoona is a self-confessed full-time surf bum who espouses an explicitly anti-bourgeois philosophy of avoiding work and commitments, living for the present, and traveling the world's surf spots. When Gidget asks him, "Doesn't everybody have to have a goal?" his casual reply is, "Who said?" He lives in a shack on the beach, surfing, smoking cigars (even on his surfboard), and generally enjoying himself, with no responsibilities and no visible means of support. Indeed, it is suggested that he is something of a leech, living off the largesse of others: He invites Gidget to a beach party on the proviso that she bring steaks from her parents' freezer and counsels Moondoggie to accept a check from his father so that he and Moondoggie can go to Peru to surf. Near the end of the film, in fact, a

disillusioned Moondoggie goes so far as to call him lazy. Yet, however much the film attempts to portray his bohemian lifestyle as irresponsible in contrast to the middle-class responsibilities that are represented by Gidget, it cannot avoid the fact that the freedom of this lifestyle is a major part of the appeal of surfing and surfing subculture.

This surf-bum emphasis on freedom, dropping out, and living for the present obviously corresponds to and indeed draws from the slightly older beatnik subculture of the 1950s. Elements associated with beat culture, such as goatees and bongo drums, appear with regularity in the surfing films. In *Gidget,* for example, we are introduced to a bearded member of the surfing gang known as Lord Byron and told, "The beard means he digs existentialism." The playing of bongos occurs, particularly in party scenes, in a number of surf films, including *Gidget, Beach Party,* and *Ride the Wild Surf* (1964). Often, however, these elements of beat culture are treated, as in AIP's beach series, rather parodically. In *Beach Party* and *Muscle Beach Party,* for example, the club where the surfing crew hangs out looks suspiciously like a Greenwich Village coffee house and is called Big Daddy's, a name clearly borrowed from beat slang. When we see the inside of Big Daddy's, the camera focuses on the playing of bongos and young women in black leotards practicing yoga. The owner of Big Daddy's, Cappy Kaplan (Morey Amsterdam), is a beatnik parody who sports a goatee and introduces himself as a poet. When we first see him in *Beach Party,* he is spouting a parodic version of beat, free-form poetry while wearing an "oriental" mask on the back of his head. He also claims—in what is clearly a joke on beatnik guru-worship—to be waiting for "the word" from Big Daddy, a derelict who sleeps through the entire movie, waking only in the last seconds to reveal himself as Vincent Price (the word that he gives us turns out to be a pitch for AIP's Edgar Allen Poe series).

Beach Party's parody of nonconformist, beatnik cultural elements is, however, somewhat different from its parody of the nonconformity of motorcycle-gang juvenile delinquents who appear in earlier teen films. Cappy Kaplan, though clearly older than his teen customers, is presented as their lovable eccentric and friend; Big Daddy's is their hang-out. While Eric Von Zipper

Above: Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon in *Beach Party*
Right: James Darren, Sandra Dee, and Cliff Robertson in *Gidget*

(Harvey Lembeck) and his motor-cycle gang, The Ratz (the female members are Mice), are, like Cappy, clearly older than the teen surfing crew, their age only makes them more ridiculous. Overage juvenile delinquents (Von Zipper's lieutenant is named, significantly enough, JD), they are presented as comically idiotic and completely ineffectual in their attempts to spoil the teenagers' fun. Indeed, the film's preference for beatnik culture over that of the juvenile delinquent may well be determined by their different attitudes toward fun, parties, hedonism.

Earlier teen films featuring juvenile delinquents, motorcycle gangs, and the like tended, for all their lurid appeal, to be rather serious; their young protagonists often appeared more tortured than fun-loving (it is difficult to imagine James Dean or Marlon Brando in a surfing movie). On the other hand, the nonconformity of beat culture, at least as filtered through films and other media, seems to have been associated much more with a certain hedonism, or at least with a distaste for work and responsibility.[11] These qualities were condensed in stereotyped comic portrayals of the beatnik, such as Maynard G. Krebs in television's "Dobie Gillis," described by one commentator as "a goateed and sweatshirted free spirit who shuddered whenever the word 'work' was uttered."[12] Significantly, "Dobie Gillis" first appeared on the air in 1959, the year that *Gidget* arrived in movie theaters, and ended in 1963, the year that *Beach Party* was released.[13]

The idea of the surf bum is clearly inherited from these notions of the beatnik as a free-spirited nonconformist more interested in enjoying life than in taking on the bourgeois responsibilities of work, marriage, and family. In most of the surfing films, in fact, the entire surfing lifestyle is presented in terms of personal enjoyment, fun, and parties on the beach, and in contrast to work and responsibility. If this makes the beach a location where the harsh realities of war and social issues can be escaped, it is at least equally a place of freedom and nonconformity, a place for those who wish to drop out of the bourgeois lifestyle.

Rock-and-Roll on Bikini Beach

The teen-oriented subculture of the surfing films did not, of course, simply adopt the elements of an older, beatnik lifestyle without alteration, but mixed them with other elements, particularly with elements of rock-and-roll and teen pop-music culture. Often, the leading roles in these films were played by actors who were also successful pop singers: James Darren in the *Gidget* films, Fabian and Shelley Fabares in *Ride the Wild Surf,* and Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello in the *Beach Party* series. In most cases, they had already achieved stardom with rock-and-roll and teen-music audiences prior to their roles in the surfing films. By casting these pop-music stars in starring roles, the surfing films were clearly designed to capitalize on their preexisting appeal—and that of music, songs, and dancing—to teenaged audiences.

This relationship between stardom in the teen music industry and in the movie business is exemplified in the careers of Frankie Avalon and Fabian. Both became teen idols under the tutelage of Philadelphia starmaker Bob Marcucci, who parlayed their clean-cut good looks and mediocre singing talents into a string of Top 40 hits and successful film careers. Avalon was the more successful of the two, with 13 songs reaching the Billboard Top 40 between 1958 and

Muscle Beach Party

1962, including two number one hits, "Venus" and "Why," in 1959, but Fabian had eight Top 40 hits, with "Turn Me Loose," "Tiger," and "Hound Dog Man" all reaching the top ten.[14] Both began their movie careers while they were still successful pop singers—with Avalon first appearing in *Disc Jockey Jamboree* in 1957 and Fabian starring in his first film, *Hound-Dog Man,* in 1959—but continued in films long after their recording careers were over.

Marcucci did not, of course, invent this formula for turning teen idol singing stars into movie stars; indeed, he merely followed the model that had recently been pioneered by the career of Elvis Presley (and to a lesser degree, Pat Boone).[15] The first of Elvis's long string of commercially successful Hollywood films, *Love Me Tender,* appeared in 1956, quickly followed by *Loving You* and *Jailhouse Rock* in 1957 and *King Creole* in 1958. The success of these films at the box office made clear to Hollywood the appeal of rock-and-roll and pop music, particularly to the newly developing teenage audience. The beach movies both drew on this appeal and added elements to it; during the early to mid-1960s, one can even see a certain cross-pollination between the beach movies and the Elvis films, with a number of Elvis's films also being set on beaches or in tropical locales: *Blue Hawaii* (1961), *Fun in Acapulco* (1963), *Paradise, Hawaiian Style* (1966), *Clambake* (1967). Similarly, Shelley Fabares, who had herself achieved pop-music stardom with her 1962 number one hit, "Johnny Angel," would go on to an acting career that included costarring opposite Elvis in three of his films, both before and after her role in *Ride the Wild Surf.*

The surf films are much like the Elvis films in another way too: one of the main accusations leveled against them is that they cleaned up and toned down the wilder aspects of rock-and-roll, its rebellious, nonconformist attitudes and especially its sexuality. Even before the *Beach Party* films, for example, Frankie Avalon had premiered on Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" as part of Clark's efforts to promote the image of the clean teen. Annette Funicello, of course, first gained fame as a child star on Walt Disney's "The Mickey Mouse Club," and even when she later became a teenage star on the pop-music scene, her image remained—under Disney's strict guardianship—one of chaste propriety. In her autobiography, she recalls that, while on tour with Dick Clark's Caravan of Stars, the other performers were instructed to clean up their language and behavior while around her.[16] Even by the time that *Beach Party* was made and she was no longer a teenager, she remained under contract to Disney, which stipulated that she would not appear in the film in a bikini.[17]

Yet, for all the efforts that the surfing films made to clean up the rebellious, sexually charged image of rock-and-roll and teen music, a major element of their appeal, like that of the Elvis films, was precisely their combination of music and dance—and the image of sexuality and freedom associated with them. Frankie and Annette's duets, usually sung on the beach itself, constantly extol the seemingly sanitized and desexualized pleasures of vacations, surfing, and beach parties. Yet the very idea of a beach party suggests teens listening to rock-and-roll music and dancing in a way that was already seen by the guardians of morality as heavily sexualized, and doing so in the titillating attire of swim trunks and, especially, bikinis. As James H. Nicholson, coproducer of the AIP *Beach Party* series, observed: "We are fully aware that our beach bunnies in bikinis are a prime attraction for the teenaged boy

Beach Blanket Bingo

who brings his teenaged girl friend to the theatre to see the barechested surfers."[18] In setting rock-and-roll music and dancing on the beach, where the participants could dance in bikinis and swim trunks, these films often heightened the sexuality and sense of freedom associated with teens and rock-and-roll.

The highlighting of sexuality is nowhere more apparent than in *Bikini Beach,* the third film in the AIP series. The film begins with shots of a never-identified woman in a bikini, intercut with shots of the various accidents she causes among the males who see her. This short sequence is immediately followed by the appearance of Frankie, Dee Dee, and the gang driving up to the beach while singing yet another paean to summer vacation, fun, and Bikini Beach. Yet, if Bikini Beach is "where the fun is had," this fun is not necessarily as clean, as desexualized, as some critics would have us believe, for Bikini Beach is also the place where "all the chicks are bikini-clad." The stuffy antagonist of the surfers in *Bikini Beach,* Harvey Huntington Honeywagon (Keenan Wynn), makes this quite clear when he complains that "this savage music . . . stimulates their post-adolescent preoccupation with sex."

The conjunction of bikini-clad sexuality and rock-and-roll music and dancing appears throughout the *Beach Party* films. Perhaps the most obvious example of this motif can be found in the dancing of Candy Johnson, who is billed in *Beach Party* as "Miss Perpetual Motion," and who is featured as a character in several of the later films, including *Bikini Beach.* Much like the woman in the opening sequence of *Bikini Beach,* Candy, her gyrations accentuated by her fringed bikini top and pants, has the ability to literally bowl men over with the sexuality of her dancing, to knock them down with a thrust of her hips. As Deadhead observes, "That Candy sure has 'the power.'"[19]

The surfing films' mixture of the fun and sexuality of the beach with that of rock-and-roll is not, however, restricted to simply their representation of beach parties and dancing. The same critics who protest the mild, pop-oriented songs of Frankie and Annette as an example of the beach movies' cleaning up and toning down of rock-and-roll often seem to forget that surf music is also a prominent feature in many of these films. Although many people associate surf music with the pristine harmonies of The Beach Boys and Jan and Dean, much of surf music is instrumental and relies on the prominent use of electric guitars, often heavy with fuzz-tone and echo-box effects.

Surf music had begun to become a force in popular music shortly before the making of the first *Beach Party* film. In 1962, surf music had just begun to hit the charts in a big way, with The Marketts' "Surfer's Stomp" reaching the Top 40 early in the year, followed by The Beach Boys' first hit, "Surfin' Safari," and The Tornadoes hitting number one with "Telstar" in December. By 1963, the year that *Beach Party* was released, surf music had become a craze—The Beach Boys had six songs go into the Top 40, including "Surfin' USA" (no. 3) and "Surfer Girl" (no. 7). Jan and Dean had a number one hit with "Surf City," while The Surfaris' "Wipeout" reached number two, The Marketts' "Out of Limits" number three, and Chantay's "Pipeline" number four. The Trashmen's "Surfin' Bird" reached the Top 40 in late 1963 and continued up the charts to number four early the next year.

The surfing films played on this craze. *Beach Party* and *Muscle Beach Party* featured performances by Dick Dale and the Del-Tones, a surf group perhaps best known for their "Let's Go Trippin'," which has been named as among the ten best surf songs of all time.[20] Another well-known surf band, The Pyramids, whose song "Penetration" reached the Top 20 in early 1964, appeared in *Bikini Beach* that same year. (Indeed, they are the band playing behind Harvey Honeywagon's condemnation of the sexuality of the surfers' music.) The title song of *Ride the Wild Surf,* which would reach the Top 20 a few months after the film's release, was performed by Jan and Dean. *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965) featured The Kingsmen (of "Louie, Louie" fame) and a non-performing appearance by Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys.

The appeal of surf music, like that of surfing itself, has indeed been presented as a matter of fun. After all, The Beach Boys even had a hit song titled "Fun, Fun, Fun." Yet this fun was not nearly so clean or innocent as The Beach Boys' harmonies might at first make it appear. The pursuit of danger and thrills is one of the main themes of surf music and this is reflected not only in the lyrics of many of the songs but also in the frenetic beat of songs like "Wipeout," "Surfin' Bird," and "Surfin' Safari." The pursuit of thrills is equally prominent in the surfing films, where drag racing and sky diving are often featured in addition to the thrills of surfing. Nearly the entire plot of *Ride the Wild Surf* is built around the pursuit of danger, from braving the big waves on the North Shore to high diving into a shallow pool. This pursuit of danger is echoed in Jan and Dean's title song, with its chorus line that repeats "Gotta take that one last ride." Clearly, the notion of fun involved here—from wild surf to wild bikinis, wild rides to wild dancing—is not readily described as "clean."

The notion of wildness suggests a certain unfettered intensity, which is connected to the thrill-seeking aspects of surfing. It also suggests a certain freedom, which is very much related to the beat aspects of surf culture. Obviously, too, the notion of wildness—with its suggestions of both intensity and freedom—has certain sexual connotations, which the surf movies exploit by linking the sexual freedom associated with the beach ("wild bikinis") to the wild sexuality of rock-and-roll music and dancing. Yet wildness also has another connotation in the surfing films: its appeal is very much connected to the exoticized appeal of "other," non-Western cultures. This connection is drawn in large part from surfing's Pacific Island origins, but it also plays on beat culture's fascination with non-Western, and particularly Third World, cultures, as well as on a more general exoticism which often imputes wildness and sexual freedom to so-called primitive cultures. Indeed, the beat-style nonconformity and beach-party sexuality that appear in the surfing films, and in surf subculture generally, are themselves heavily dependent on borrowings from Third World, and particularly Pacific Island, cultures.

In *Gidget,* for example, the leader of the surfing gang—with his beatnik-style attitudes toward work and responsibility—is known as the Great Kahoona, a title that we are told means Big Chief in Hawaiian, and which was supposedly conferred on him during his travels by a friendly Hawaiian chief. Actually, the word kahuna is generally translated as "priest" or "keeper of the secret," but since there were kahuna for many daily activities, the word can also, by extension, be understood to mean "expert."[21] The honorific of "Kahoona," then, not only draws upon the exoticism associated with Hawaiian culture, it also serves to convey a special knowledge and commitment. The Great Kahoona is not simply a devoted surfer, he is a full-time surf bum who has supposedly traveled to all the world's exotic surfing spots, and he plans to take Moondoggie with him on his next surfing excursion to Peru. As he tells Gidget, "Either there, or Hawaii. You know, gotta follow the sun." His connection to these exotic, faraway places and cultures is emphasized by the bongos and "Polynesian" masks that adorn his grass beach hut. The Kahoona is, in fact, quite aware that this connection to exotic cultures contributes to the appeal of his surf-bum persona. Near the end of the film, Moondoggie points to a mask and says, "The island of Kauai—see the very place where the natives presented this to the Great Kahoona." Kahoona, in response, admits, "I bought it in Acapulco for 20 cruddy pesos."

We are therefore led to believe that the Kahoona's name and indeed his entire persona are equally fraudulent. This revelation, of course, serves to make Moondoggie's choice of returning to college and beginning a relationship with Gidget much more acceptable. Yet the necessity for such a seedy revelation itself suggests the appeal of the surf-bum lifestyle; it is as if it might prove too attractive in comparison to suburban, bourgeois life and must therefore be discredited.

Like surf subculture, the surfing films continually draw on the exoticism, wildness, and sexuality that is associated with "other" cultures.[22] This is nowhere more true than in the place that these films give to the bikini. The bikini was named by Louis Réard, a French automotive engineer involved in his family's lingerie business, in the wake of the 1946 atomic test explosions on Bikini Atoll (Operation Crossroads).[23] These tests would in fact continue well into the 1950s, and the bikini's association with them apparently did nothing to harm its popularity. Indeed, the bikini only began to become popularly accepted in the mid-1950s, after the U.S. had exploded several hydrogen bombs (Code Name Bravo) in the Bikini Atoll chain, obliterating three small islands, thoroughly irradiating Bikini Island, and raining radioactive ash on several neighboring, and populated, chains. Although Réard later claimed that he had named the bikini for the atoll, not the atomic tests, his introduction of the bikini came just four days after the first test made front page news all over the world and gave him the edge on designer Jacques Heim, whose rival design was named, significantly, the Atome. The bikini's association with atomic bombs and testing seems, in fact, to have contributed to its *succès de scandale,* conveying a sense of "explosive," uncontrolled sexuality while nevertheless retaining the exotic and sexual connotations of life in the "South Seas."[24] Indeed, the bikini-style suit was first popularized in Europe during the 1950s by such "bombshells" as Brigitte Bardot, who was photographed at the 1953 Cannes Film Festival wearing a bikini, and Diana Dors, who appeared at the 1955 Venice Film Festival wearing a mink bikini.[25] Shortly after this, with Hollywood stars such as Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield photographed wearing low-cut two-piece suits, the bikini-style suit began to become popular with youthful consumers in the U.S. Indeed, by the summer of 1960, it was already popular enough to have inspired teenager Brian Hyland's number one novelty hit, "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polkadot Bikini."

Beverly Adams, Reginald Gardner, and Mickey Rooney in *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini*

Teen-oriented filmmakers were quick to capitalize on this trend, playing on the bikini's exotic and sexually explosive connotations. AIP used "bikini" in the title of three of the seven films in the *Beach Party* series. Posters for *Muscle Beach Party* advertised, "When 10,000 biceps go around 5,000 bikinis, you know what's gonna happen," while those for *Bikini Beach* trumpeted, "It's where the girls are bare-ing, the guys are dar-ing and the surf's rare-ing to go, go, go."

In *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini*, this connection between the bikini and the exotic wildness of Pacific Island and other cultures is made even more explicit. The wild bikini of the film's title is introduced through a rather absurd plot device which has Frankie off serving Naval Reserve duty in the "South Seas."[26] Lounging under a palm tree with a bikini-topped "Polynesian" woman, he reluctantly rejects her advances because of his obligations to Dee Dee. When the woman, espousing a love-the-one-you're-with philosophy, suggests that Dee Dee is probably cheating on him, he becomes jealous and accepts her suggestion that he visit the local "witch doctor" (Buster Keaton) for help. At Frankie's request, the "witch doctor" dispatches a bikini-clad female spirit designed to draw the attention of any male suitors away from Dee Dee. When this female spirit then appears, she is wearing a leopard-skin bikini.

How to Stuff a Wild Bikini not only derives much of its appeal from the exotic and sexual connotations borrowed from "other" cultures, it also conflates elements of Pacific Island culture with such clearly non-Pacific Island cultural elements as "witch doctors" and leopard skins.[27] On the one hand, this conflation points to a rather disturbing exoticism in which all Third World cultures tend to be seen as similarly wild, irresponsible, sexual, and even "primitive." Yet, on the other hand, the fact that these attributes are so frequently associated with surf subculture suggests that they are not simply seen as "other." Or, perhaps more accurately, it suggests the extent to which surf subculture sees itself as "other," as culturally different.

This sense of cultural difference is not, however, based solely on appropriations from Pacific Island culture, but often seems to merge elements from a variety of cultures that are similarly viewed as "wild" or "primitive." These terms are precisely the basis of Harvey Honeywagon's criticism of the sexuality of the surfers' music and dancing, which he sees as "straight out of the jungle": "It's this savage music that stimulates their post-adolescent preoccupation with sex. These children are nothing more than animals." To reinforce his point, he has his trained chimpanzee perform all the stunts that the surfers do, from surfing to drag racing to dancing. The obviously racist implications of Honeywagon's criticisms here echo the attacks on rock-and-roll music by 50s moralists, for whom the African-American roots of rock-and-roll conjured a stereotyped vision of otherness as precisely a matter of wildness, sexuality, savagery, and primitivism.

Nowhere is the sexuality of surf subculture more clearly linked to the exoticized stereotypes of otherness and primitivism than in *Beach Party*. Much of the plot of the film, in fact, revolves around the attempts of "famed anthropologist" R. O. Sutwell—played with convincing naiveté by Bob Cummings—to study the sexual behavior of the surfing subculture, just as he had previously studied that of "primitive" tribes. Treating the surfers as if they were some exotic species of animal, Professor Sutwell begins his study by using a tele-

scope and audio recording devices to observe the surfing crew from the blind of a nearby beach house. When we first see him, he is so engrossed in his observations that he is startled by the entry of his research assistant Marianne (Dorothy Malone). His voyeuristic preoccupations are immediately made clear when Marianne suggests that he is acting like a Peeping Tom. This suggestion that the professor's interests are sexual is reinforced when he tells her the rather academic-sounding title of his new book is *The Behavior Pattern of the Young Adult and its Relation to Primitive Tribes,* and she responds: "You mean, *Teenage* Sex."

For his part, Professor Sutwell denies that his interest in the surfers' sexual behavior is anything other than scholarly. He calls them "a true subculture" and, in what is obviously an allusion to the work of Margaret Mead, describes them as "a society as primitive as the aborigine of New Guinea." He asks Marianne to bring him a number of reference works, including "all of Max Jacobson's works on puberty rites, Merkeson's studies of the Aztec fertility symbols in Spanish Key, coming of age, that sort of thing." Later, he will even go so far as to record a reminder to himself to prepare "a brief footnote" on the comparison of the surfers' "mating rituals" to the "Haitian voodoo ceremony, the Samoan puberty dance, and the mating dance of the whooping crane."

Marianne, however, is not fooled by Professor Sutwell's scholarly facade, nor by his anthropological pretensions of distance from the object of study. She recognizes that the exotic appeal of the surfing subculture, both for Sutwell and for the audience, is profoundly erotic and voyeuristic. Indeed, in an extraordinarily self-reflexive comment, and one that says a good deal about the parodic appeal of the surfing films themselves, she advises Sutwell to "hang onto the picture rights [for his book]; American International will snap it up in a minute."

The Appeal of the "Other"

Without meaning to be glib, I would like to suggest that there is a certain similarity between the position that many film and cultural critics attempt to maintain and that of the anthropologist in *Beach Party*. In arguing, for example, that the appeal of the surfing films is based on a comforting conformity that supports the ideological status quo, such critics take a rather patronizing position, outside or above the conformity of the consumers who are presumed to be the audiences for these films. Like Sutwell, they assume a critical distance from their object of study that denies their own personal stake, their own personal pleasure, in these films. These critics, like Sutwell, become voyeurs of popular culture, never acknowledging their own investment in the object of criticism. In doing so, moreover, they also deny the extent to which the appeal of these films is based not solely on a desire for conformity, but also on a desire for nonconformity, wildness, otherness.

It would, of course, be easy enough to turn this criticism around and condemn these films not so much for their conformity as for their exoticism. We might well, for example, criticize these films for the way that they appropriate elements of cultural, racial, and sexual otherness for white, middle-class, and largely male consumption without acknowledging the status of these elements as "other." That, however, does not seem to me like a good reason that critics should then repeat this mistake by themselves failing to acknowledge that these elements, however much they have been appropriated and recuperated, are crucial to the appeal of these films. Yet, even if we, as critics, acknowledge that their appeal is based on their appropriation of otherness, can we then simply condemn them for their exoticism? Or must we also condemn their appeal and their pleasure? To do so, it seems to me, not only denies that we, as critics, might find pleasure in these films; it also denies that otherness—whether cultural, racial, or sexual—could have an attraction, an appeal, that is not simply a matter of exoticism, that is not ideologically suspect or complicit.

I would argue that in our haste to condemn the appropriation of otherness, the exoticizing of its appeal, we often give too much credit to the appropriative power of hegemonic discourse while at the same time positioning ourselves outside that power. Even when otherness is appropriated and exoticized, as in the surfing films, this should not mean that these other elements cease to be other, nor that the appeal of these films becomes *simply* a matter of exoticism, racism, sexism. If we are not careful, our criticisms of appropriation and exoticism can become yet another way of refusing to acknowledge otherness, of reducing the Other to the Same.

This is not to argue that we should simply accept the exoticism, racism, and sexism of the surfing films, or that we should not look critically at their appropriations of otherness. I hope that I have, in fact, drawn critical attention to the issue of appropriation, to the question of what might be called "appropriate appropriation." When, or under what circumstances, is the appropriation of otherness "appropriate"? On what basis

should we distinguish between, as bell hooks puts it, "cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation"?

In her essay "Eating the Other,"[28] from which I have obviously appropriated the title of this essay, hooks discusses a number of examples of popular culture that involve the appropriation of otherness, including the pleasures and eroticism that are often associated with it. Although she critiques many of these appropriations for upholding ideological stereotypes of exoticism and otherness, she also finds cases where the taking up of "other" cultural elements indicates a willingness "to challenge and disrupt the status quo." She therefore concludes that the appeal of otherness, if acknowledged and critically explored, need not be automatically condemned as exoticism or as "eating the Other":

> Within a context where desire for contact with those who are different or deemed Other is not considered bad, politically incorrect, or wrong-minded, we can begin to conceptualize and identify ways that desire informs our political choices and affiliations. Acknowledging ways the desire for pleasure, and that includes erotic longings, informs our politics, our understanding of difference, we may know better how desire disrupts, subverts and makes resistance possible. We cannot, however, accept these new images uncritically.[29]

There is, of course, much to criticize in the surfing films' appropriation and representation of the appeal of otherness. No one could deny that these films fail to acknowledge those "others" from whom they appropriate their appeal, that they in fact consistently efface them even while they exoticize and eroticize the appeal of otherness, often playing on the worst stereotypes.

With these criticisms in mind, however, I still want to argue that we should not merely dismiss or condemn these films. First, I would simply note that they frequently parody the exoticized stereotypes of wildness and primitivism that some of their characters associate with surf subculture. In *Beach Party,* Professor Sutwell's equation of that subculture with "primitive societies" is derided as academic double-talk that masks his own sexual interests, just as his professorial beard masks his own youth. In *Bikini Beach,* Harvey Honeywagon's stereotyped and racist views of rock-and-roll as sexualized, savage, animalistic, and straight out of the jungle are similarly derided as a moralistic front through which he distances himself from his own pleasure. Perhaps more importantly, I would argue that however much these films appropriate and exoticize the pleasures of the "other," however much they play on the stereotypes of wildness and primitivism, they still present us with the desire of white, middle-class American youth for something different from the status quo. One can, of course, argue that this desire for otherness is merely a way in which the appeal of "other" cultures, races, genders, and even sexualities[30] is appropriated while maintaining the privileged status of dominant groups. I would, on the one hand, agree that this argument applies to a large extent to the surfing movies. Yet, on the other (sic), to stop with this argument, to assume that this appropriation and privileging is the whole and only story of these films, is to take a rather pessimistic view of not only these films and their audiences, but of popular culture generally, and of any possibility for ideological change. It is also, too often, a way in which we, as cultural critics, assume an anthropological position of distance from the cultural products and consumers that we study.

I do not, of course, mean to advocate here that film and cultural criticism should simply turn from textual and ideological critique to audience studies, which have their own anthropological pretensions. Rather, I am suggesting that, just as queer readings of culture have pointed to the existence of submerged, but still operative, queer elements, sensibilities, and desires within straight culture, an exploration of the appeal of popular cultural products for their audiences can similarly point to a preexisting, if often overlooked, desire for otherness within mainstream popular culture and its audiences. In acknowledging and exploring the often buried appeal of otherness within the surfing films, and in popular culture generally, we can perhaps better understand how the comforting conformity of these films could coexist with the much more explicit representations of nonconformity, sexuality, and otherness of that time—and of our own time. Rather than simply dismissing these films and their audiences as conformist or appropriative or simply reactionary, we can see in them indications of a desire for something other than ideological conformity. In doing so, we might also begin to see how film and cultural criticism, without abandoning its critical role, could acknowledge its own investment and its own pleasure in even those popular cultural forms that seem most supportive of hegemony, and how it might also acknowledge its own connection to those audiences that it still too frequently sees simply as uncritical, appropriative conformists, dedicated only to the mindless pursuit of reassurance and escape from society's all-too-obvious problems.

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Notes

1. A 1957 Opinion Research Corporation survey has shown that 72 percent of the moviegoing audience was under 29, and 52 percent was under 20. Cited in Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1976), 375.
2. See, for example, the materials cited in Mark Thomas McFee, *Fast and Furious: The Story of American International Pictures* (Jefferson, N. C.: MacFarland and Co., 1984), 146–153.
3. Cobbett S. Steinberg, *Film Facts* (New York: *Facts on File,* 1980), 63–64.
4. Cited in McFee, 144.
5. Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 195.
6. Gary Morris, "Beyond the Beach: Social and Formal Aspects of AIP's Beach Party Movies," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 21 (Spring 1993): 5. Actually, *Gidget* was released in March, 1959, but videotapes of the film list the copyright date as 1958, which may account for Morris's confusion.
7. This sense of a historical time warp is perhaps reinforced by the successful return of Frankie and Annette in 1987's *Back to the Beach.*
8. Morris, 7.
9. Ibid., 4.
10. Ibid., 4.
11. There are, however, cases in which beatniks and juvenile delinquents are treated as essentially the same. See, for example, *The Beatniks,* directed by Paul Frees in 1960. A somewhat more unusual case is Roger Corman's horror/spoof *A Bucket of Blood* (1959), which uses beat culture as a backdrop for its story of a coffee-house busboy who creates amazingly realistic sculptures by covering his victims with clay.
12. Alex McNeil, *Total Television,* 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 202.
13. Dwayne Hickman, who starred as Dobie Gillis, also appeared in a starring role in *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini.*
14. I have taken the chart positions of these hits, and those that follow, from Joel Whitburn, *The Billboard Book of Top 40 Hits* (New York: Billboard Books, 1992).
15. Like Elvis, Boone was quite successful at parlaying his success as a singing and recording star into a movie career, beginning his film career just after Elvis with starring roles in *Bernadine* and *April Love,* both in 1957. Boone was, of course, the prototype for the clean teen, refusing to even kiss a woman in those films. He eventually appeared in 15 films, as well as hosting his own television show from 1957 to 1960.
16. Annette Funicello with Patricia Romanowski, *A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 103.
17. She did, however, appear in a two-piece suit, cut just at the naval.
18. Cited in McFee, 150.
19. As if this were not clear enough, later in *Bikini Beach,* Deadhead, having just been leveled by a woman skilled in French foot-fighting, remarks that "she's got in her feet what Candy's got in her . . . hips." The long pause, during which someone shouts "Surf's up," is obviously intended to suggest that Deadhead is about to say something more than "hips."
20. Dave Marsh and Kevin Stein, *The Book of Rock Lists* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1981), 554.
21. See, for example, the Cyber-Hawaiian Dictionary Online, http://www.hisurf.com/cgi-bin/DM/dictionary.cgi.
22. In this context, it is worth noting the place of "other" cultures in Bruce Brown's famed surfing documentary, *The Endless Summer* (1966), which follows two surfers around the world—from Australia to Africa—in pursuit of the perfect wave. Of note, too, are the brief surfing scenes in Vietnam in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), in which the line, "Charlie don't surf"—popularized in a song by The Clash—appears.
23. On Operation Crossroads and the Bikini people, see Robert Stone's documentary, *Radio Bikini* (1987).
24. A note on the 1997 Cannes Festival website (Cannes has been closely associated with the bikini since Brigitte Bardot was photographed at the 1953 festival wearing a bikini) suggests that Réard named the bikini "after the atoll which had been 'disrobed' by the American nuclear bomb tests in 1946." http://www.festival-cannes.fr/cannes97/50ans/a40c05.html.
25. Bardot's appearance in a bikini (and less) in Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu . . . créa la femme* (*And God Created Woman* [1956]) should also be noted in any history of the bikini and the scandals surrounding it.
26. Presumably, this island is not one of those in the Bikini Atoll chain.
27. One might think that this kind of conflation is a product of 1960s naiveté about other cultures, yet in *The Surfin'ary: A Dictionary of Surfing Terms and Surfspeak* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1991), the following definition appears for Kahuna: "A Hawaiian witch doctor adopted by modern surfers as an imaginary surfing god."
28. bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 21–39.
29. Ibid., 39.
30. Given their emphasis on male groups and their continual exposure of male bodies, the beach or surfing films are particularly open to queer, or at least gay male, readings.

Bothwell Browne in Mack Sennett's *Yankee Doodle in Berlin.*

Anthony Slide

The Silent Closet

Despite a plethora of books in recent years on gay and lesbian cinema, scant attention has been paid to sexual preference in relation to the American silent film industry. The problem is not only that the majority of silent films no longer survive for study, but also that documentation on a subject that was not open to discussion within the film community is virtually nonexistent. Many silent actors and actress were simply too young or too naive to comprehend anything different about their colleagues. For example, Mary Brian was the leading lady of gay actor William Haines in his first major screen success, *Brown of Harvard* (1926). When asked bluntly if she was aware of Haines' homosexuality, she responded in the negative and pointed out that even if she had been told of it, as an 18-year-old she would not have known what it meant.[1]

Because homosexuality within the industry has always been hidden from public disclosure, writers and scholars who attempt to document the contributions of gay and lesbians to Hollywood history must rely primarily on gossip. Most gossip, of course, comes second- or third-hand, and identification of many performers as gay or lesbian is more wishful thinking on the part of the gay community than fact. Because early talkies leading man Charles Farrell has a high-pitched voice and a slightly effeminate mannerism, he is assumed to be gay. Any marriage Farrell entered into would have been one of convenience, with the implication that his wife, actress Virginia Valli, was a lesbian. Yet there is no evidence to support such a contentions. At the same time, because Lilyan Tashman was a lesbian—or as her director, Edward Sloman,

described her to me, "a naughty girl"[2]—there is every reason to assume that her husband, Edmund Lowe, was gay, particularly in view of Lowe's marriage, after Tashman's death, to his wife's closest friend.

A number of show business biographers, notably Charles Higham, have routinely labeled deceased members of the film industry as gay or lesbian. Their sources are never documented, their books never footnoted, but, as fewer and fewer members of the early film industry are around to be interviewed, authors more and more rely on their fellow biographers. What began as nothing more than unsubstantiated gossip quickly becomes fact. And even a fact can be distorted. A number of biographers have recounted an incident that supposedly took place during the making of *The Single Standard* (1929). During a love scene, Nils Asther kissed Garbo rather roughly and she pushed him away, asserting, "I'm not one of your sailors." In repeated tellings, this anecdote has come to reflect badly on Garbo: She appears to be angrily turning on her leading man, deriding him for his homosexuality. The source of this quote is a former World War II sailor who later became an actor. He met Asther on Hollywood Boulevard in the early 1940s and enjoyed a long-term relationship with him. As Asther originally told the story to his sailor friend, Garbo felt that he was playing the scene in too physical a fashion, with too much aggression; her comment was not directed at his sexual preference.

I had known the source of the Nils Asther story for many years without being aware of his relationship with the actor. Because of our long-term friendship, he was open in his discussion of the gay aspects of his life. Since the late 1960s, as a professional historian and writer, I have interviewed many surviving members of the silent film community. On a first meeting, obviously, one does not touch upon controversial issues. However, at some point, my relationship with many of these silent screen personalities changed; we became friends. They have entertained me and I have entertained them at lunches and dinners through the years. A tape recording is inhibiting. A glass of wine is not. What is spoken of over the dinner table cannot be broached in the course of a formal interview.

Gossip is presented here in its only acceptable form: It is not hearsay, but first-hand recollection, documented as to source. Historians of gay and lesbian cinema generally choose to ignore the silent era, but to understand either film history or the history of gays and lesbians in the twentieth century, one must consider the story within its total context. As both a gay man and a silent film historian, I feel almost a sense of obligation to set the record straight [sic] and to provide for a wider audience what documentation I have unearthed—more often through happenstance than determined prying—in the hope of facilitating additional scholarly research.

The pioneering work on gay and lesbian cinema is Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet.*[3] Like the subsequent documentary of the same title, it is notably weak in its examination of gay and lesbian aspects of American silent film, emphasizing, as an example of homosexuality, a sequence from William Wellman's 1927 World War I epic, *Wings,* in which Charles "Buddy" Rogers kisses a dying Richard Arlen on the lips. Just as this sequence has much to do with male bonding and little to do with overt homosexual love, so has an 1895 Thomas Edison short of two men dancing no kinship to gay and lesbian cinema.

This so-called first gay film is, in reality, an experimental sound short—the sound for which is lost—wherein Edison associate William K. L. Dickson is seen playing the violin as two male laboratory workers dance. The two men provided the movement for the moving picture not because they were sexually attracted to each other but simply because there were no female employees at the Edison laboratory; even the secretaries were male, confirmed an Edison historian. There are in fact gay connotations to be found in the beginnings of American cinema, but they took place prior to Edison's involvement with the motion picture.

Eadweard Muybridge is a name that routinely crops up in any discussion on the pre-history of the cinema. A British-born photographer, he was the first, in 1872, to photograph fast movement with a series of shots of a horse in motion. Muybridge continued his experimental work at the University of Pennsylvania in 1883, and, four years later, the university published 781 of his photographic plates under the title of *Animal Locomotion.* What has made these plates appealing to general audiences ever since is that they are not limited to animal locomotion but also depict human beings. The humans are generally unclothed, with 133 sets of plates showing fully nude males photographed from the front, rear, and side. The most homoerotic of these plates are those numbered 345–348, which show two good-looking young men wrestling. In style, they are reminiscent of the gay 8mm films released by the Los Angeles-based Athletic Model Guild in the 1950s and 1960s—provocative and arousing, and more explicit than their later counterparts.

The Single Standard

Just as Edison's 1895 short can be dismissed as non-gay, it might be easy to deem outrageous the suggestion that Muybridge was aware of any overt sexual elements in his experiments. It is interesting that, unlike contemporary painters or art-school classes, he refused to use professional models, but insisted on students and citizens of Philadelphia posing for his photographs. Muybridge got a kick out of the female nudes; the male nudes were more appealing to his friend and supervisor, the great American painter Thomas Eakins (1844–1916).

Like Muybridge, Eakins had, as early as 1885, experimented with photographs of motion utilizing naked men, and one of his best-known paintings, "The Swimming Hole" (1885), is of five male nudes (modeled by his students). There has always been the implication that Eakins was gay and that he had a relationship with the hunky-looking sculptor Samuel Murray, with whom he shared an apartment for a while. It was Eakins who served on Muybridge's supervisory committee at the University of Pennsylvania, and who persuaded Butler to be one of Muybridge's nude models.

If Muybridge is one of the inventors of the motion picture, D.W. Griffith is the director largely responsible for its primary development. And it is Griffith who introduced the first gay element into American cinema. One of the most camp performances ever captured on film is that of the eunuch in Griffith's 1913 production of *Judith of Bethulia.* Here is America's first gay character on screen, an outrageous stereotype played by J. Jiquel Lanoe, who appeared in some 105 films at American Biograph between 1910 and 1913 and was the lover of Harry Hyde, another Biograph actor during the same period. The two were not the only gay men with the company. *Judith*'s leading lady, Blanche Sweet, identified to me[4] as another "homo" Edwin August, who began his career with Biograph in 1908 and was active through 1947.

Judith of Bethulia is not the only film by D. W. Griffith to feature an effeminate character. The Duc d'Anjou in *Intolerance* (1916) is played as effeminate, and obviously gay, by actor Maxfield Stanley. Because of this performance, a 1997 compilation, *Color Me Lavender,* suggests that Stanley was homosexual, but one has only to look at his performance as the "masculine" Duke Cameron in *The Birth of a Nation* to realize that in *Intolerance,* he is doing nothing more than hundreds of straight actors have done since—portray a gay character.

The American Biograph Company is open to more titillating conjecture than any other early producer, thanks to D.W. Griffith's first wife, Linda Arvidson, who, in 1926, authored a memoir titled *When the Movies Were Young.* Originally published by E.P. Dutton, this is the *Hollywood Bablyon* of its day. Reading between the lines, one quickly perceives Mrs. Griffith's hidden agenda—a determination for revenge on all those who had hurt her and influenced the breakup of her marriage. The book also contains much suggestive material on the sexual behavior of the company's players. What Mrs. Griffith has to say may be condemned by some as nothing more than titillating rumor, but one would do well to remember that she was there at the time, and even her book was published at a time when the individuals involved were still alive and still active in the industry.

J. Jiquel Lanoe (center) as the eunuch in *Judith of Bethulia*

Mrs. Griffith refers to the sleeping arrangements of the actors on location, noting how lucky was Dell Henderson, who "copped little Jack Pickford as his bedfellow." Much space is devoted to character actress Kate Bruce, "the saintly 'Brucie,'" sneers Mrs. Griffith, who "pillowed in her lap or on her shoulder by turns, all the feminine heads of sufficient importance." With increasing venom and sarcasm, Mrs. Griffith writes of Brucie's thoughtfulness in providing overnight accommodation for those girls living too far from the studio to answer an early morning call. Dorothy West was one actress who often accepted Brucie's hospitality: "She had a strong maternal complex, had the maidenly Kate Bruce."

J. Jiquel Lanoe, Harry Hyde, and Edwin August were the first in a long line of gay leading men in silent films. They were followed by J. Warren Kerrigan, Eugene O'Brien, Gareth Hughes, Harrison Ford (no relation), William Haines, Nils Asther, and Ramon Novarro. Just as in the theatrical community, the film industry accepted gay actors provided they remained discreet about their sexual preference and there was no public suggestion of impropriety.

In his 1914 autobiography, *How I Became a Successful Moving Picture Star,* J. Warren Kerrigan explained that "It doesn't seem quite fair to me for a picture hero to be married, because I have my Mother." Female fans might have tolerated such a comment at the time, but three years later, when Kerrigan announced he was much too "sensitive" a type to join the war effort and that his country should first take "the great mass of men who aren't good for anything else," he was denounced by *Photoplay* (August 1917) as one of the "beautiful slackers." The label hinted at effeminacy, and by 1923, when he starred in his last film, *Captain Blood,* producer Albert E. Smith noted that the actor really was too effeminate for the role.

Gareth Hughes, who later became a priest, was so sexually active that most leading ladies refused to kiss him for fear of contracting disease; one exception was Viola Dana, who once joked that she would kiss anybody—and did. But homosexuality was on occasion looked upon as advantageous. Producer Joseph M. Schenck was jealous of his wife Norma Talmadge's leading men, fearing that she might embark on an affair with one or more of them. Therefore, he welcomed and promoted Eugene O'Brien's playing opposite Talmadge in some nine features in the teens and 20s.

Those too naive to comprehend an actor's homosexuality were often rudely awakened to the knowledge. Alice Terry, a leading lady of both Valentino and Ramon Novarro, recalled for me going on location with the latter and handsome, fledgling leading man Malcolm McGregor for her husband Rex Ingram's 1922 production of *The Prisoner of Zenda.* Novarro suggested to McGregor that the two men share a room; the next morning, a white-faced McGregor informed his director that he could no longer accept Novarro as a room-mate.[5]

Rumor has proliferated in regard to Alice Terry and her director/husband. While Alice was open-minded in her attitude toward homosexuality—she would often accompany Ramon Novarro to gay Hollywood nightspots in the 1930s—her private hours were spent in the company of actor Gerald Fielding. Alice and Ingram were a devoted married couple who maintained

Sunrise

separate bedrooms at their Nice villa and occupied homes side-by-side after retirement. Because he discovered such handsome leading men as Valentino and Novarro, it has been suggested that Rex Ingram was gay. In reality, the evidence suggests that he was asexual, fascinated by all aspects of sexual behavior, but not a willing participant. Ingram certainly knew the locations of gay hangouts and, in the 1940s, provided publicist Herb Sterne with a map of such nightspots in Morocco. Sterne, in turn, passed the guide on to former silent screen actress Claire Du Brey, the one-time lover of M-G-M star Marie Dressler.

Most gay men like to believe that heterosexual leading men have indulged in occasional homosexual "flings." A drunken Ralph Graves once revealed to me that he had bedded a number of male personalities in the teens and early 1920s: "I was a young male; I'd been in bed a couple of times with a couple of fairies. Noel Coward came to my house, loved it, and said he didn't like Hollywood faggots. He knew I was one thing. And Somerset Maugham." Graves also spoke of "an unholy relationship" with Mack Sennett, to whom he was under contract in the 1920s, and with whom, Graves told me, he spent every day and every night for two years.[6] The suggestion that the King of Comedy, who never married, might have been gay is generally greeted with scorn by film historians, but there is circumstantial evidence that such an inference can be made. In *When Movies Were Young,* Mrs. Griffith, in discussing the sleeping arrangements for actors on location, makes reference to Sennett's "very chummy quarters"; she also notes his total lack of interest in women: "We wondered about Mack Sennett. Would he ever buy a girl an ice-cream soda?" Legend has it that Sennett was to have married Mabel Normand but that shortly before the wedding, she discovered him in bed with actress Mae Busch. I would conjecture that it was not an actress but an actor with whom Sennett was found in flagrante delicto? And could it have been that revelation that Normand used to force Sennett to form a production company in her name?

F.W. Murnau is the only well-known gay director of the silent era and may have used his position at Fox to procure young men. The director was certainly attracted to contract player David Rollins, with his all-American, boyish good looks. In 1928, Murnau tested the young man for a part in *Four Devils,* and asked that he remove his trousers. As Rollins recalls, Murnau, liking what he saw, invited the actor to his home to swim naked in his pool and to pose for nude photographs. When Rollins asked the studio if it was necessary that he participate in these games, he was told that he should be nice to the director. Rugged leading man George O'Brien, the star of Murnau's *Sunrise,* has been romantically linked with F.W. Murnau. Based on my knowledge of and friendship with O'Brien, I feel

it is unlikely that the two men had a homosexual relationship, although a close friendship did exist between them. O'Brien told me that his father put up the money to pay for the music score to Murnau's last film, *Tabu,* and that the director was returning from repaying that debt when he was killed in a car crash.

The better-known lesbians in Hollywood during the silent era include Evelyn Brent, Alla Nazimova, Nita Naldi, Pola Negri, and Lilyan Tashman. Nazimova was influential in the career of Natasha Rambova, the stepdaughter of cosmetic magnate Richard Hudnut and the second wife of Rudolph Valentino. Valentino's first wife was Jean Acker, who left her husband on their wedding night for actress Grace Darmond.

Because of the earlier fiasco of a marriage and because of the Nazimova connection, it has been assumed that Valentino and Rambova were gay. Not true: Rambova used Nazimova to further her career, while Valentino was, if anything, asexual. Cinematographer Paul Ivano shared a house on Whitley Heights in Hollywood with Valentino, and, in a 1976 interview with me, he commented, "They accused Rudy of being a homosexual; they said Natasha was a lesbian. It's a lot of baloney. Valentino was the greatest promoter so far as promoting dames. We would take the poor things to Musso Frank for dinner, and then go to the house for a drink. He'd sit down in the armchair and fall asleep. I would say I'm going to bed, and ten minutes later, someone would knock on my door, and the dame would land in my bed."[7] Apparently Valentino was an expert at picking up women but lost interest in them once he had made the conquest and was happy to pass the ladies on to the somewhat physically unattractive Ivano.

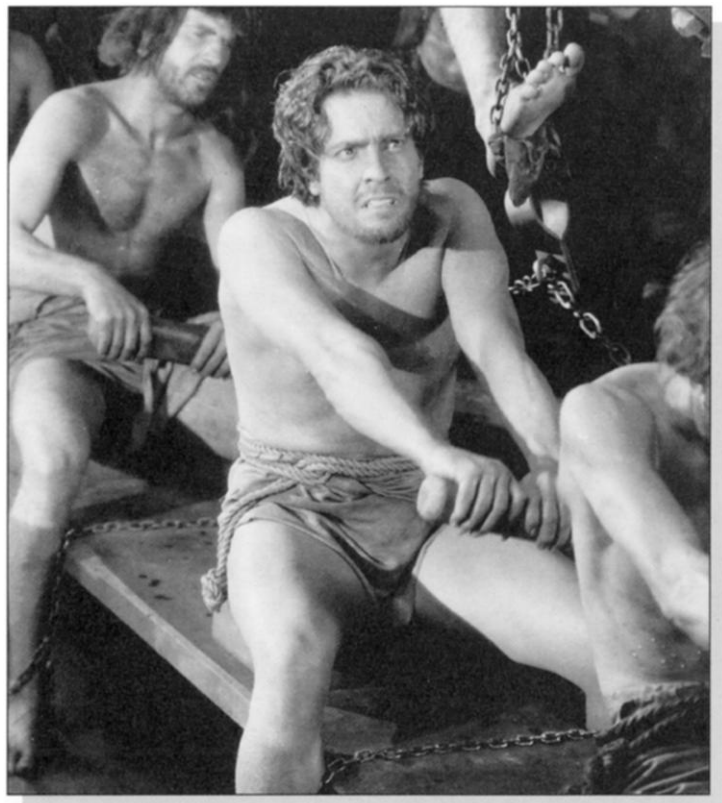
Director Dorothy Arzner, arguably Hollywood's best-known lesbian of any year, positively flouted her sexual preference, appearing on set and in publicity photographs in mannish attire. Esther Ralston was the star of Arzner's first two films as director, *Fashions for Women* and *Ten Modern Commandments,* both released in 1927, and she was subjected to what can only be described as sexual harassment by Arzner—the first in a long line of actresses whom the director would persuade to sit upon her lap and whose breasts she would fondle. Arzner was well liked and an acceptable guest at Hollywood dinners, although like all gays and lesbians who followed her in the industry, she was careful never to bring along her lover. The rigid social mores of the time, which Hollywood hosts and hostesses were anxious to emulate, required that dinner guests be seated around the table in male/female combinations. Two men or two women together might easily threaten both a liberal attitude and the seating plan. Producer/director Andrew Stone, who began his career in 1927, says she was the only lesbian he knew back then; he was aware, like many, of Arzner's affair with Billie Burke; and he is of the opinion that she thrived because Hollywood had fewer prejudices in the 1920s: "I never heard that used against her. I don't think there was much discrimination in those days. Only later."[8]

In hindsight, it might well be that what modern audiences perceive immediately as gay or lesbian was less obvious in an earlier decade. The implication as to sexual orientation is less pointed, less threatening to others, and thus less subject to discrimination. We readily asume that Dorothy Arzner's clothes and hairstyle "read" homosexuality. But do they? The same severe, mannish clothing and the same kind of hairstyle were also adopted by designer Edith Head in 1930; she chose them not to make a sexual statement but because they suited her and helped her to stand out in the community. Comedians of the 1920s, including Jack Benny, Frank Fay, and Harry Rose, chose to perform in what is today assumed to be an effeminate style, but which was nothing more than mannered and contemporary to period audiences. If any of these performers had been gay, it would not have been obvious from the effeminate act.

Andrew Stone and others in the film industry were unaware of discrimination because much of what was gay or lesbian was not particularly apparent to them. Arzner did not flaunt her lover at the dinner table; among gay actors, only William Haines appears to have insisted on bringing his lover, Jimmy Shields, to the studio or to non-gay social gatherings. But Shields was also Haines' social equal and his business partner and as such already dealt with many in the business community; his presence anywhere could be justified.

Lesbians were more visible in silent films than gay men, their appearance as background helping to set the scene for a particular milieu, such as a Greenwich Village nightspot. One of the first identifiable lesbian characters on screen is "the eccentric aunt" to Lillian Gish in D.W. Griffith's *Way Down East* (1920), portrayed by Florence Short, known in the film community to be a lesbian. Maude George was an impressive lesbian nightclub owner in Lewis Milestone's *The Garden of Eden* (1928), although, as far as I am aware, she was not a lesbian but a good character actress.

Male friendship is the dominant theme of two 1927 films, *Wings* and *Flesh and the Devil.* Based on a German novel by Hermann Suderman, the latter is the story of two men, played by John Gilbert and Lars Hanson, who, as boys, have sworn a blood bond of eternal friendship. Their relationship is torn apart at military school when Greta Garbo, in the character of Felicitas, falls



Ben-Hur

in love with Gilbert. While the two men are honorable types, the film emphasizes that the Garbo character is unconscionable in her actions. At the conclusion, the two men, both in love with Garbo, fight a duel, but neither is able to fire the fatal shot. Garbo, rushing to the scene, falls through the ice and drowns. "Then the happy ending when the spring comes and the blossoms bloom," as *Variety* (January 12, 1927) put it, with the two men reunited. There is a similar, if Americanized, love triangle in *Wings,* between Clara Bow, "Buddy" Rogers, and Richard Arlen. Here, it is Arlen who dies, comforted in his last moments by a kiss on the lips from Rogers.

Present-day gays looking for role models in silent films might feel shortchanged, but there are homoerotic sequences in American productions. Two such scenes (both decidedly sadomasochistic in content) can be found in *Ben-Hur* (1926). The first takes place in the bowels of a Roman warship where scantily clad slaves toil at the oars while a naked male figure tied face to the wall writhes in the background. A few moments later, a handsome and near-naked Roman officer is dragged on the deck of a pirate ship and bound to its prow, his body crushed as the ship deliberately rams the Roman galley.

Obviously gay characters are strictly limited to camp and effeminate stereotypes, as in the Stan Laurel short, *The Soilers* (1924), with its swishy cowboy, or *Irene* (1926), with George K. Arthur as prissy Madame Lucy, the effeminate owner of a New York dress-making establishment. Arthur's comment to Colleen Moore, as the title character, that "You walk almost like a man!" is met with the response, "So do you!" It is a title that says it all—and one borrowed from an encounter at the Algonquin Hotel between Noel Coward and Edna Ferber.

The point of Arthur's characterization was that it would neither offend nor disturb an audience—he was as gay as Robin Williams' character in *The Birdcage.* As *Variety* (March 10, 1926) noted, "Nothing fresh, vulgar or objectionable about the way Arthur plays it, just 'sissified' and funny, so even the average lay mind will absorb it as desired."

The "sissification" of the American male was a cause for humor in the teens and 20s. In a popular song from 1925, "Masculine Women! Feminine Men!," composers Edgar Leslie and James V. Monaco wrote of men with permanent waves and of "trousers baggy and wide, nobody knows what's walking inside." As early as 1917, the popular fan magazine *Motion Picture* wrote on the story of "He, She, or It,"[9] noting the substantial number of films in which actresses had donned trousers and actors wore dresses: "In these days of suffragets [sic] and long-haired poets, bifurcated skirts and lisping laddies, it's hard to know who's who and what's what. It's getting to be quite the rage—this exchange of identi-

Julian Eltinge, in and out of drag

ties."[10] From the vaudeville stage, female impersonators such as Julian Eltinge and Bothwell Browne[11] embarked on film roles that would display their feminine charms. The premise was always the same: They were wholesome, all-American boys who put on a dress for a joke or to outwit a national enemy. In private, there was little doubt as to the gentlemen's homosexuality, but in public and on screen they were red-blooded, womanizing men.

With the 1930s and the coming of sound, the female impersonator disappeared from the vaudeville stage and the effeminate male character dropped from the screen. Actors such as William Austin, Edward Everett Horton, Franklin Pangborn, and Grady Sutton, all of whom were gay in private life and had previously been identified as "sissies," were now suddenly described as "prissy." Effeminate performers had been accepted for three decades in large part because audiences in general did not identify effeminacy with homosexuality (indeed, many Americans had no concept of homosexuality). Female impersonators on stage, with one or two exceptions (notably Savoy and Brennan), stressed their "masculinity." Some, such as Bert Errol, included their "wives" as part of the act. Julian Eltinge, who lived with his mother, was notorious for picking fist fights with fellow vaudevillians to prove just how tough he was and how foolish the effeminate label.

Female impersonators appealed primarily to women—the latest fashions they displayed were as much of an attraction as the acts. As W. C. Fields once remarked of Eltinge, "Women went into ecstasies over him. Men went into the smoking room." However, by the 1930s, audiences had become more sophisticated and familiar with homosexuality. At worst, it implied child molestation; at best, the wearing of female clothing, effeminate voices, walks, and mannerisms—and it was unacceptable as a form of entertainment.

The Production Code, which had been around in the 1920s, came into forceful dominance in the 1930s. Words such as "fairy," "nance," "pansy," and "sissy" were banned from the screen vocabulary. Homosexuality, identified by the Production Code as "sex perversion," was outlawed: "No hint of sex perversion may be introduced into a screen story. The characterization of a man as effeminate, or a woman as grossly masculine, would be absolutely forbidden for screen portrayal. This means, too, that no comedy character may be introduced into a screen play pantomiming a pervert."[12]

Novels of the period with film settings openly discussed the reality that many male stars only enjoyed the company of their own sex. Jack Preston's *Screen Star* (1932) has a Hollywood actress find her boyfriend in bed with an actor.[13] In Haynes Lubou's *Reckless Hollywood* (1932), an extra says of Hollywood stars, "They're Mr. and Mrs. God according to the sex, and

you can't even be sure of that in this town."[14] With its exposé of the immorality and dishonesty of the film community in 1930, the novel *Queer People* caused a sensation.[15] The authors, Carroll and Garret Graham, meant no gay connotation with their title, but they did write of "women of all sexes and men of none." In 1930, *Variety* reported that only "he-men" were wanted by the studios for chorus boys: "It has been discovered the average American film fans resent effeminate men . . . even though a male chorus line might have only a couple of geraniums the fans quickly spot 'em."[16]

American audiences were beginning to learn what a homosexual was; they didn't like the sound of him, and most certainly, they did not want to be reminded of his existence in their popular entertainment. Discrimination against gays and lesbians began not only on screen, but also within the Hollywood community. An actor such as William Haines might be openly gay to his friends and colleagues within the film industry, but once the general public began to have an inkling of his sexual orientation, the industry closed ranks against him. As can be seen in a "Screen Snapshots" short from the early 1930s, Dorothy Arzner and her lover Billie Burke might attend a Palm Springs premiere together, but once Burke spots the newsreel camera, she hastily distances herself from the director. Hollywood takes its cue from the public. In the 1930s, stereotypical Jewish comedians suddenly became offensive to a majority of filmgoers, and performers such as Benny Rubin were suddenly out of employment. Similarly, gays and lesbians in Hollywood found their characterizations banned from the screen and quickly stepped back into the closets from which they had briefly emerged a decade earlier.

There was certainly a gay underground within popular entertainment but it was very hidden and apparent only to an "in" crowd. Noel Coward wrote of "pretty boys" in his song "A Green Carnation," in the musical *Bitter Sweet.* Sophisticated audiences in London and New York could appreciate the lyrics but M-G-M excised the song from its 1940 film version. Gays got a chuckle from the 1932 Betty Boop cartoon *Any Rags,* when an effeminate Koko the Clown had the winning bid at a sale and the auctioneer commented, "Sold to the man in the red necktie." There were plenty of gay men in and out of Hollywood who understand the symbolism of green carnations and red neckties, but the general public then, as much indeed as now, had no comprehension of what these objects symbolized.

Tolerance was in decline, as evidenced by the many within Hollywood—Gary Cooper, Victor McLaglen, Walter Wanger, Hal Roach, etc.—who embraced some aspects of Fascism. Discrimination against gays and lesbians was in force as much in Hollywood as it was throughout the United States. Actors and actresses who had found no reason to hide their sexual preferences a decade earlier were forced into a closet that remained steadfastly closed and bolted until the 1990s.

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Notes

1. Interview with the author, June 16, 1997.
2. Conversation with the author, June 1, 1972.
3. Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies.* New York: Harper & Row, 1981.
4. Interview with the author, October 1, 1971.
5. Conversation with the author, May 10, 1978.
6. Interview with the author, July 14, 1973.
7. Interview with the author, May 12, 1976.
8. Interview with the author, July 5, 1995.
9. Pearl Gaddis, "He, She, or It," *Motion Picture Magazine,* July 1917, vol. xiii, no. 6, pp. 27–33.
10. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
11. Julian Eltinge appeared in eight films, beginning with *How Molly Made Good* in 1915. Bothwell Browne was the star of the Mack Sennett feature *Yankee Doodle in Berlin* (1919).
12. Olga J. Martin, *Hollywood's Movie Commandments: A Handbook for Motion Picture Writers and Reviewers.* New York: H.W. Wilson, 1937, p. 180. Martin was the former secretary to Joseph I. Breen, head of the Production Code Administration.
13. Jack Preston, *Screen Star.* New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1932. Preston was the pseudonym of John Preston Buschlen.
14. Haynes Lubou, *Reckless Hollywood.* New York: Amour Press, 1932. Haynes Lubou was the pseudonym of a female writer.
15. Carroll and Garret Graham, *Queer People.* New York: Vanguard Press, 1930.
16. "Chorus Boys' Stern Okay for Talkers," *Variety,* June 11, 1930.

REVIEWS

Deep Crimson

Director: Arturo Ripstein. Producers: Marin Karmitz, José María Morales, Fernando Sariñana. Writer: Paz Alicia Garcíadiego. Cinematographer: Guillermo Granillo. Music: David Mansfield. New Yorker Films.

When Nicolás Estrella (Daniel Giménez Cacho), an opportunist who preys on gullible, lonely women, shows up on the doorstep of Coral Fabré (Regina Orozco), the single mother of two small children, in Arturo Ripstein's *Deep Crimson* (*Profundo carmesí,* 1996), the stage is set for another of the director's explorations into the shadowy world of Mexicans living on the margins of social as well as moral decay. As he did in the four preceding films co-scripted with Paz Alicia Garcíadiego (beginning with *The Realm of Fortune* [*El imperio de la fortuna,* 1985]), Ripstein presents a Mexico in which characters feel trapped by the sense of their own mediocrity and come to dream of escape through disguise, pretense, and deceit.

Nico's ruse, impersonating a Spanish exile who bears a striking resemblance to Charles Boyer, is built on his understanding of that desire for escape through pretense as though it were an axiom of Mexican cultural identity. Foreignness and the hint of an exoticism rooted in Hollywood movies are two crucial marks that, for Coral, promise some hope of deliverance from her prosaic and claustrophobic world. It gradually becomes apparent, however, that Nico's impersonation of Boyer is also a way for him to escape his own drab existence. Central to the world Ripstein evokes is the discrepancy between who these two characters really are and the self-images they have constructed as part of their pathetic and ultimately tragic masquerade.

The allure of erotic passion that propels both characters is a measure of the allure of the movies; it also reflects the emotional and physical squalor of their own dreary lives. In the dingy mise-en-scène shaded by grim hues of brown and rust that is so evocatively captured by Guillermo Granillo's photography, the couple evokes the desperation of Hollywood 40s noir characters, here transposed into a Mexican landscape that bears no resemblance to the usual scenic images provided by Mexican cinema of the same period.

By having Coral and Nico come together around a movie illusion of idyllic love, Ripstein is able to layer his relentless probing of lives on the edge with a measure of cinematic self-reference that serves as a metacommentary on Mexican culture itself. The key to Nico's seductive charm with women lies in his toupee, which gives his appearance the Boyer-esque touch of a romantic movie idol. As in some biblical parable, the

Irene Gallardo (played by Marisa Paredes), Coral Fabré (Regina Orozco, center), and Nicolás Estrella (Daniel Giménez Cacho)

hair(piece) becomes a fetishized object of sexual power, which, tellingly, Nico seems always on the verge of losing, exposing what he calls the freakishness of his baldness. Coral too has her points of vulnerability: her obesity; her two young children, whom she sees as a burden to the realization of her amorous desires; and, finally, her bad breath (which, she explains, comes from her days working as a nurse in a morgue).

This cinematic dimension is key to both the story and the personality of the two protagonists. These characters are motivated less by spontaneous desires than by the illusion of the roles depicted in movies and popular music that they have absorbed as part of their own identities. This is the story of two self-deceiving characters whose deceptions feed off each other, gradually moving the plot from a grotesque kind of farce toward the unrelenting blackness of tragedy that indirectly reveals Ripstein's nihilistic vision of Mexico.

Having callously abandoned her two children to make herself more acceptable to Nico, Coral shifts from passive and vulnerable female to a much more aggressive role by threatening to expose him to the police if he does not let her follow him. But just as quickly, she is able to shift back to a perversely romanticized notion of self-sacrificing love "just like in the movies" when at one point she cuts off her own hair and weaves a new toupee for him after his hairpiece has fallen into the dirt. Through this kind of gesture, the couple forges a symbiotic love that seems to find its logic only in the melodramatic movie plots that the two embrace as their personal imitations of life.

The reciprocity of mutually authenticated illusions becomes the mechanism through which Ripstein charges his episodic plotting. Having convinced Nico that she is his ideal mate, Coral starts to manage his "business affairs" by setting up the dates and charting the itinerary for the chain of seductions that will comprise the rest of *Deep Crimson.* Most of Ripstein's films up to this point have emphasized closed, claustrophobic narratives in which characters feel themselves trapped in place. In his 1972 *The Castle of Purity* [*El castillo de la pureza*], for instance, a father incarcerates his entire family in an old house in order to protect them from the sinfulness and depravity of modern society. In contrast, Nico and Coral's search for victims for their con jobs at first gives the film the appearance of an open-ended road movie, with each new change of locale leading to a new victim, which in turn develops a crescendo of deceit, violence, and finally murder. Despite the suggestion of open-endedness, however, Ripstein's signature motif of desperate characters ensnared in traps of their own invention clearly reemerges when the tale is finally spun out.

The action, set in northern Mexico at some point in the 40s, is a neo-noir concoction that foregrounds the stylistics of nostalgia flics but with a decidedly critical edge. The couple's itinerary brings them to revisit the sites of Mexican Golden Age cinema's principal genres: the *cabaretera* and *ranchera* films. (The *cabaretera* or "fallen woman" genre was so named because the plots often involved heroines forced by circumstance to work in a cabaret; the *ranchera* genre took its name from the setting of these films on a ranch and usually involved a singing cowboy and comic sidekicks.) But this is not the clichéd sunny Mexico of happy campesinos or other folkloric stereotypes. *Deep Crimson*'s evocation of Mexico's movie tradition, far from paying homage to the likes of Dolores Del Río, Maria Félix, and Pedro Infante, uses these hints of nostalgia to suggest the impoverishment, decay, and corruption that such a cinema masked for Mexicans.

Ripstein has long stood in opposition to official visions of Mexican culture both in terms of the politics and, more noticeably, the very look of Mexican films. Rejecting the easy stereotypes of cinematic Mexicanness, he has posed in their place a series of questions about the ways Mexican cinema portrays itself. In this film he exploits the retro ambience of the setting and the nostalgic twist of the narrative to make the crucial connection between those popular but false images of Mexico and the way Mexicans come to image themselves.

Deep Crimson paints a relentlessly bleak portrait of a cultural landscape littered with the debris of failed dreams: a deserted *cabaretera*-esque cantina called Bar Intimo, where Coral serves one of Nico's victims a cocktail laced with rat poison as he dances to the rhapsodic strains of a tango; the Home-Run Motel, where Coral bludgeons another widow to death with a religious statue; finally, the dilapidated *rancho,* converted into a car-repair shop, where Nico and Coral commit their most heinous murders. These are spaces of deception and violence, but also the places where the murderers and their victims seem to feed off the false nostalgia of certain self-deluding myths about who they are that eventually fold back on a political landscape.

Deep Crimson is ostensibly a remake of Leonard Kastle's 1969 film, *The Honeymoon Killers,* a low-budget work that has become a cult classic. Over the years, Ripstein and Garcíadiego have frequently returned to what appears to be the model of the remake. Their first collaboration, *The Realm of Fortune,* was a new ver-

sion of the original Juan Rulfo script of *The Golden Rooster* (*El gallo de oro*), first directed by Roberto Gavaldón in 1965. Ripstein's 1991 film, *Woman of the Port* (*La mujer del puerto*), appears to be a more conventional effort at a remake of the famed Mexican melodrama of brothel life in the port of Veracruz made by the Russian emigré Arcady Boytler in 1933. But in each of these films, as in *Deep Crimson* also, the idea of the remake is less an effort to update and re-do an earlier classic than to develop what amounts to a dialogue between certain representations of a Mexican cinematic and cultural past and the contemporary audience. Part of that dialogue with the past is to be noted in the ways Ripstein's protagonists in *Deep Crimson* seem almost conscious of the derivativeness of their identities.[1]

Coral and Nico are drawn to each other by the very self-conscious sense that they are imitating Hollywood illusions. But they are second-rate, doomed actors in a Mexican scenario that bears only a sham resemblance to the world of movies. The often comic discrepancy between the remembered cinematic illusion and its contemporary evocation serves to underscore their pathetic self-deceptions. A pointed sign of the derivativeness that deforms their way of seeing themselves and others comes at the very end of the film, when, after committing murder and infanticide, they turn themselves in to the local police. Barely acknowledging the heinousness of their actions, the two cling to a romantic notion of their deeds. Nico imagines that he and his lover will be the objects of press interviews and notoriety. He quickly discovers that the corrupt police have no intention of following the pattern of movie plots with trial and execution. Instead, the couple is driven to a deserted landscape where they are told to flee so that they can be shot. Realizing that, in this bizarre twist of events, they have ironically achieved the very erotic paroxysm that each has sought, Coral tells Nico, "This is the happiest day of my life." Running for cover from the police, they are shot down, and the final lingering image of the film reveals the two lifeless bodies dramatically extended over a puddle of mud. Here the myth of unbridled passion confronts its final pathetic destiny in a way that transposes this seemingly unpolitical narrative into the contemporary reality of Mexican official corruption. This is the Mexico of the 40s, but it bears a pointed connection to the harsh realities of state violence and official hypocrisy of the 90s.

At its core, *Deep Crimson* reveals Ripstein's effort to demolish certain cultural myths that Mexican cinema has long purveyed to its audience. The most pivotal of these is that of self-sacrificing maternity. The corpulent Coral has been nurtured on a countermyth: the exotic fictions of harlequin novels, radio dramas, popular love ballads, and the Hollywood star system, emblematically embodied by the framed photograph of Charles Boyer over her dressing-table mirror. In the opening scene of the film, we see her reclining luxuriantly in her bed reading a *fotonovela* in a style reminiscent of certain Diego Rivera nudes. But the glossy images of passion that fill her mind collide with the reality of her own maternity, her two small children whom she prefers to hide when Nico first comes calling. Clearly, the myth of motherhood—one of the sacred icons of popular Mexican culture—clashes head-on with her fantasized self-image as a femme fatale. Abandoning her children at the door of a convent in order to follow Nico, Coral rejects her identity as mother, only to reencounter it ironically in Nico himself who, far from being the Charles Boyer of her dreams, turns out to be her surrogate son.

The figure of incest is flaunted when they masquerade as brother and sister; one of their intended victims is revolted to discover what she believes is the couple's incestuous relationship. She is only partially mistaken, for there is indeed something of the incestuous mother and son in this pairing, as Coral's frequent cradling of Nico in her arms to calm him suggests. At the very end of the film, after coaxing Nico to murder another widow, Coral must dispose of the body of the woman's daughter. She grips the lifeless body to her bosom and sighs, "I'm her mother now."

Ultimately, it is this Oedipal narrative that redeems the grifters' farce as tragedy. The maternity that Coral struggles to avoid but which, through a series of ironic twists of fate, she is forced to accept, seems to transform her from one more of Ripstein's self-deceived loners into a figure of truly tragic dimensions.

Ripstein's career has always sought a difficult accommodation between his natural attraction to a Mexican film tradition and a more international, cosmopolitan cinema that disavows the localism of his Mexican roots. What may account for the critical and commercial success of *Deep Crimson* in Europe and the United States is his apparent flaunting of both national and transnational elements as black comedy. Filmed as a French-Spanish-Mexican coproduction, the film shows a Mexico populated by Mexicans who long to be cosmopolitan and Spaniards who are both imposters and real, along with a chain of other starstruck and downtrodden characters.

In one scene, for instance, with a certain autobiographical resonance, Ripstein has Coral and Nico

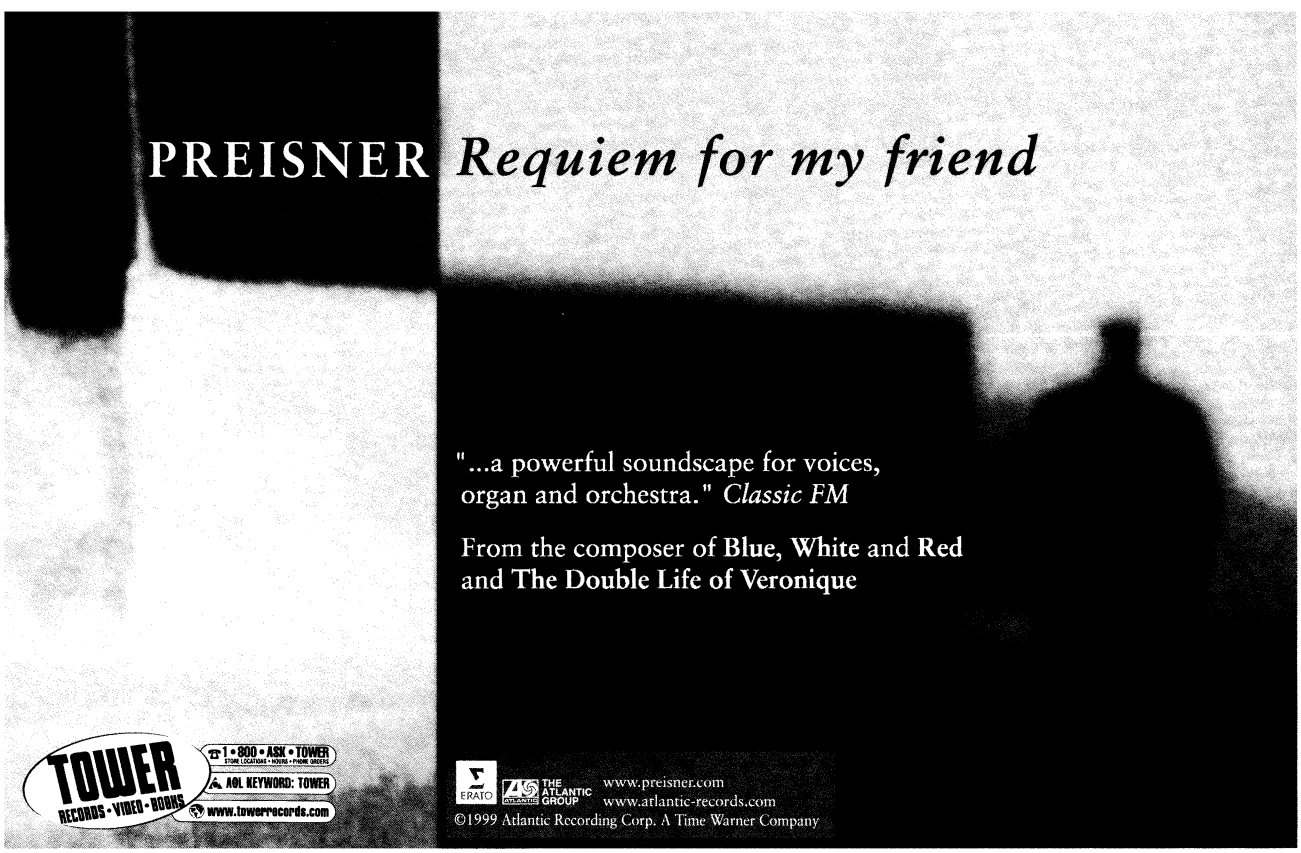
arrive at the home of a Spanish widow, Irene Gallardo, played by Marisa Paredes, the Spanish actress who, in recent years, has become internationally aligned with the films of Pedro Almodóvar. Irene is entertaining her neighbor, Sara Silberman, an atheist-anarchist who makes clear that she does not for one minute believe Nico's preposterous story of being a religious Spaniard on a charitable crusade in the New World. Coral's defensive response is to pose the xenophobic question to Sara Silberman, "You're not from here, are you?" "No, responds Sara. "I *chose* to live in this screwed-up country." Later, in an attempt to explain Sara's cynical views, Irene tells Nico and Coral that her neighbor is a Jew, then adds, "But you can hardly tell." Through this brief comic sequence, as throughout *Deep Crimson,* Ripstein leads his audience to question the assumption of the very existence of a pure and presumably authentic Mexican culture, suggesting that it is an imposture as blatant and farcical as that of the two protagonists.

Yet ultimately Ripstein understands that this culture of subterfuge and imposture is anything but farcical. The characters of *Deep Crimson* self-consciously define the closed circle of their illusions. On the day of her execution, Coral wears the same crimson dress she wore the day she first met Nico. Like the incestuous circle of her relations with him, the dress, once the mark of her farcical actions and self-delusions, now returns as the leitmotif of tragedy. That final scene describes Ripstein's Mexico as tragic farce, a remake of its movie self in which characters play out the outdated and derivative illusions of their lives as tragedy.

Marvin D'Lugo directs the Screen Studies Program at Clark University. He writes frequently on Spanish-language cinemas and is the author of *The Films of Carlos Saura: The Practice of Seeing* (1991) and *Guide to the Cinema of Spain* (1997).

Notes

1. Paulo Antonio Paranaguá has detailed much of that intertextual dialogue in Ripstein's work generally, and in *Deep Crimson* in particular. See Paulo Antonio Paranaguá. *Arturo Ripstein: la espiral de la identidad.* Madrid: Cátedra/Filmoteca Española, 1997, pp. 277–89.



Ecce Homo

Writer/director: Vesna Ljubić. Producers: Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Studio Production. Cinematographers: Milenko Uherka, Dragan Ressner. Editor: Sadeta Muhović. Powerful Choices.

Vesna Ljubić at the funeral of her mother, from *Ecce Homo.*

Ecce Homo, a 27-minute documentary about the siege of Sarajevo, is made with such strength and vision that it goes beyond being a document of a specific event to become a unique poetic meditation on life and death, victimization and endurance. The title, "Behold the man" or "Behold Man," comes, of course, from the Bible. "See, I am bringing him out to you, that you may know I find no crime in him," says Pontius Pilate referring to Christ, and then adds: "Behold the Man!" [John XIX, 5]

Before the recent war in the Balkans, Sarajevan Vesna Ljubić was known as one of the very few successful women filmmakers in the former Yugoslavia. She wrote and directed the feature films *The Last Switchman of the Narrow Gauge Railway* (1987), *The Defiant Delta* (1980), and, in 1971, while still a student, *Simha* (a love story about Sarajevo's Jewish community), along with documentaries such as *Journey* and *Death Is Paid Off by Living* (both 1970). Ljubić's feature films are characterised by fantastic realism and poetic film language, and by a unique mixture of tragic and comic elements; she has won numerous prizes and awards in the former Yugoslavia and abroad. Ljubić studied directing in Rome's Experimental Center and RAI in the early 70s, worked as an assistant for Federico Fellini, made films for Bosnian Sutjeska Film (the most important film company in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and for Sarajevo television, and produced and directed a series of documentary films in India.

She spent the recent war in her besieged home city of Sarajevo; she could have left for good but chose not to. "I always felt like a citizen of the world," she says, "at home everywhere. But when the siege of Sarajevo started I felt I had to share the destiny of my city and its people."

Ljubić told me about gathering nettles under mortar fire, her health problems related to years of starvation, and her leaving the city by an 800-meter-long underground tunnel whose entrance was hit by mortar fire as she was approaching it. "People behind pushed me to run forward at that very moment in order to catch a pause between bombardments, and I ran over all those dead bodies not knowing if the blood on me was theirs or mine." However, Ljubić was not interested in talking about her life of constant danger or the immensity of her achievement—managing to complete a 35mm film in a war zone. "I am no martyr and don't make me into one," she said. "Everyone there went through the same things."

Ljubić shot *Ecce Homo* over a period of two-and-a-half years, from the spring of 1992 until late in 1994. The film crew was often exposed to sniper fire and shelling, and had to struggle with hunger, cold, and exhaustion, as well as with the lack of basic materials, including gas. Everything had to be bought on the black market and the cost of production skyrocketed. Women journalists of the Italian peace organization Beati i Costruttori di Pace (Blessed are the Builders of Peace) took the footage out of Sarajevo under mortar fire; it was developed in Italy and brought back to Sarajevo for editing.

Ecce Homo avoids most graphic presentation of violence and thus set itself apart from the prevalent Western media's presentation of Sarajevo's tragedy—full of bloody corpses and screams—which both alerted and numbed viewers to the carnage. "Human dying is an intimate thing," says Ljubić, "and yet cameras all over Sarajevo peered into people's guts and blood, denying them the privacy of death; making out of it an almost pornographic spectacle." Ljubić's film is much more subtle and effective, claiming back the images and the right to tell one's own story. A scene of people running across the street and one person falling down,

presumably shot by a sniper, is followed by a shot of a young man lying on the pebbled street and breathing gently. Beside him is a kneeling girl who looks at her companion as if she is trying to preserve his image forever, and whom we see in the next shot standing by a grave. Or we see a long shot of a quiet, almost idyllic summer scene of bathing in the river, reminiscent of images of bathing in the sacred Ganges. A sudden loud sound ruptures this peace, water explodes wildly, and people flee. Some, however, remain lying on the bank in grotesque poses; we see a close-up of a very young and apparently dead girl with dark curls over her face staring into camera.

Ecce Homo has no spoken words to explain what is happening in front of the camera. The Sarajevan people do not talk about what they are enduring year after year, and there is no voiceover to dilute or direct the powerful impact of Ljubić's images. The filmmaker quotes a verse from the Indian *Upanishads,* "Words return with their tasks not done," to underline her conviction that what her film shows extends beyond the power of words.

One of the main themes of the film is the Sarajevans' struggle to secure the essentials of life—gathering water, for instance, which was available only in a few places in the city. We see groups of people with white plastic canisters running under sniperfire, and hear their heavy breathing full of effort and fear, or we see schoolchildren rollerskating or running up and down the city stairs as fast as they can, holding canisters in their hands. There is a striking scene of a woman dressed in an elegant black-and-white dress with a black-and-white wide-brimmed hat, her hands in white lace gloves seizing the handles of a cart full of water containers.

Ecce Homo, however, goes beyond the representation of Sarajevans as starved victims under constant fire. The water which people carry in many scenes becomes a symbol of life; we repeatedly see a shot of water streaming from a faucet and glistening in the sunshine. Ljubić's film shows Sarajevans as people who were forced to become reacquainted, en masse, with the basics of water and heat, life and death. Knowing that you may die at any moment—and that the existence of the future cannot be assumed—brings a strange and luminous importance to the present moment. Under the ubiquitous shadow of death, life in Ljubić's film becomes triumphantly aware of itself. Ljubić herself talks about people who have "realized enlightenment" and discovered the depths of their "talent for living." Her camera often lovingly lingers on close-ups of individual faces, and these shots attain the beauty of still photographs and something strangely reminiscent of Rembrandt's portraits, confronting us with faces whose sad wisdom goes beyond words.

Ljubić could not, however, entirely avoid filming scenes of chaos and sudden attacks: when she intended to show a tranquil scene of people bathing and washing in the river, she ended up filming a surprise mortar attack on the people in the water. (This attack put her in a coma for a few days with two pieces of shrapnel in her head.) But she includes such explicit violence only sparingly, and never shows graphic footage of bloodied bodies or screams of anguish. Yet *Ecce Homo* refuses to represent Sarajevans merely as passive victims of the siege, defined only by what is done to them and not by what they themselves do. Ljubić focuses on the Sarajevans's efforts to preserve and assert their humanity and remember peace.

In the ruins of a hotel with the appropriate name of Europa, the Palcici children's choir performs Strauss's "Blue Danube Waltz," with lyrics such as "We are so light/our youth full of wishes/will always be with us/protecting us when the day is gone" and "Our life is short/we need to know how to live." Their

voices carry on to the next shot, where young amputees stand on crutches in a circle, with the camera shooting from the point of view of a nurse positioned in the center, who throws a ball to each of the smiling children. A man sings in the ruins of the National Library, the single most targeted building in the whole city; another man quotes from *Hamlet* while standing on a garbage pile.

Shown through a montage which combines Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish rites into one funeral service, the four religions coexisting in Sarajevo attain the harmony of a single purpose and single spiritual message. Thus we hear the higher-pitched and melodious Muslim prayer accompanied by the low-voiced sermon of a Catholic priest. In *Ecce Homo*'s powerful sound score, constant gunshots and sounds of shelling are juxtaposed with sacred choral and organ music and with the sounds of nature, the most prevalent being the strongly reverberated flapping of birds' wings. Ljubić says that the fluttering of wings reminds her of the "souls hovering over my city." At the end of the film we hear a song (sung by well-known Sarajevo ballad singer Jadranka Stojaković), with lyrics expressing a desire to simply fly away from all this: "If I were a bird, if I had wings." The song, however, ends with the words, "Still there is hope/Sarajevo is older than hatred."

In 27 minutes Ljubić shows dignity in dying, affirmation of life, the stubborn refusal to give up, the simple wish to fly away, the assertion of hope, and "the souls" of those who have departed and of those who still live in the city. While most films dealing with the violence in the former Yugoslavia play up the profitable presentation of the Balkans as a place of elemental instincts, animal sexuality, dirt, and violence—of, as it were, irreducible ethnic difference and existential otherness—Ljubić asserts a common humanity and the basic recognizability of Sarajevans as us. "Do not ask for whom the bell tolls," *Ecce Homo* says. "It tolls for you."

Gordana P. Crnković is an assistant professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and a member of the Cinema Studies Program at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Ecco Homo is available on video from Ljubić's U.S. representative, Cody Sontag, c/o "Powerful Choices," P.O. Box 30918, Seattle, WA 98103. Ljubić herself welcomes inquiries and correspondence, and can be reached in Sarajevo at (387-71) 520-897 (fax); 462-542 (o); 653-651 (h).

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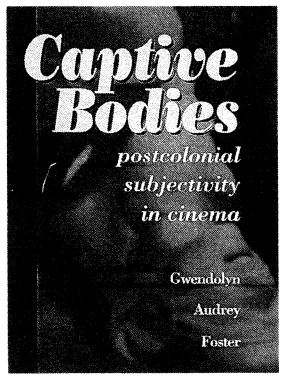

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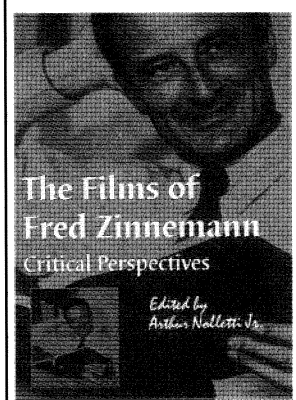

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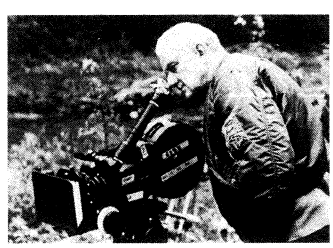
Tony Richardson directing *Blue Sky*. Courtesy of Orion Pictures.

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Mother and Son

Director: Alexander Sokurov. Producer: Thomas Kufus. Screenplay: Yuri Arabov. Cinematographer: Alexiei Fyodorov. Editor: Leda Semylnova. International Film Circuit.

In the last minute of Alexander Sokurov's *Mother and Son* the screen goes dark, and we hear birds singing, the rustle of wind in trees, the memory of the intermittent chug-chugging of a laboring locomotive fading in the distance. At the same time, in the theater, we become aware, suddenly, of a cough, a seat creaking, our own breath. No one says anything, and the silence is palpable, as deep as the one within ourselves. In this silence we know what stillness is, and what it is like if nothing follows.

In the film, a son (Aleksei Ananishnov) takes care of his dying mother (Gudrun Geyer). He cleans the house, prepares food, reads to her, talks about her past, reports on old friends, as if this visit were much like any other. But they both know this is his last visit, and awareness of death is everywhere. He asks her if she would like to take a walk in the woods, but he has to carry her. Her explanation of postcards and photographs has undercurrents of perplexity: *I will never understand this. Is this all life was?* What she would like to eat, whether she would like to rest, whether she wants to go outside—these are questions heavy with overtones of last things. Love cannot be spoken, because to speak of love at this moment is to speak of death. Yet love is in every gesture and action, in what their words don't say, what their silence does, for there is no opportunity beyond this one. She dies, and he is abandoned in an autumnal world that itself has been forsaken by the slow progress of the train out of this landscape. The sun shines, the wind blows, birds sing, and he is alone.

The terrain of *Mother and Son* seems to be that of documentary, of real life, but at every point in the film we are reminded of Sokurov's camera. It continues to hold on scenes long after they have been, apparently, concluded—on the mother's face as she sleeps, or the sweep of a field. The effect is to force us to pay attention to what we would not be able to in shorter, more rapidly cut scenes, and to fill in the absence of movement and narrative trajectory with whatever we may see on the screen or hear on the sound track. Since there is rarely any background detail or contextual information, we are left to make sense of things from these visual fragments—the mother absently stroking her son's hair while he reads to her; the sky darkening; the rumble of thunder; a close-up of her hand after she has died, a moth crawling over her skin. We piece the film together as we would anything we observe from the outside without the usual explanatory clues.

The dark screen at the end of the film is emblematic. By stripping away conventional elements of film, Sokurov isolates and underlines what remains. As we look at the dark screen, we hear birds, wind, a locomotive. Or in the hesitant speech of the mother to the son struggling to control his grief, we hear the words all the more clearly because there are so few of them. "You will still have to go through all I have suffered," she says to him. "It's so unfair." To pare away is to emphasize, and thus Sokurov reasserts the primacy of detail lost in the sweep of cinematic practice.

Our sense of what we see in *Mother and Son* is further affected by distortion of the image, which makes the film appear as if it were done by an amateur. Sokurov uses mirrors and panes of glass, "in front, and on the side, and behind [the lens], placing them on different support structures,"[1] which causes both lengthening and narrowing of images. In addition, Sokurov painted on the glass and mirrors. Thus in a film which strips away narrative complexity and cinematic effect to make it seem as if what we see is indeed the natural world, we find instead one that is constructed. "I destroy real nature and create my own," Sokurov says, "rather than a natural one."[2]

The shock of artifice within what appears to be a natural setting removes us from the conventions and clichés with which we normally understand or mediate nature and grief. The conventional wisdom always elides the ineffable, but it must be abandoned if we are to discover what can be said about what cannot be spoken, and it is Sokurov's achievement that he has found the means to do so. At one point, when we see the son in a copse of birches, Sokurov's distortion of cinematic perspective is the shock through which the young man's confusion and uncertainty in the face of death is revealed—a rupture that brings the void rushing back. The director lifts the veil over the conventions with which we mediate death; his artifice is the means to undo artifice. "I once had a teacher who said that anything inside a frame is art," Paul Schrader says in his interview with Sokurov. "When this cup is put inside of a frame, it's not a cup, it's art." "I disagree with that," Sokurov answers. "Art is the hard work of your soul. And a cup is still a cup."[3]

In *Paris,* his film about making films, Raymond Depardon searches among the faces in the crowds around the Gare Saint-Lazare for a woman who will understand what he intends and thus be able to make

Aleksei Ananishnov
as the son

the film with him. Without her there is no film. Actors will not do, since they rely on their craft or try to anticipate what the director wants. In *Mother and Son,* Sokurov chooses people he has met by chance or knows well for his actors—a woman who works on documentaries in Berlin and a man who is a manager in the Pepsi-Cola plant in St. Petersburg—to overcome these limitations. It is a choice not unlike the one he made about the camera. If his actors are not actors, their response to dying and death cannot be the trained gestures of the actor, intended to bring about displacement, distance, consolation. Instead, the reactions of Sokurov's principals permit that fissure in the social fabric through which the abandonment of dying and death rushes.

Many of Sokurov's films are about death, dying, the past, what has been lost, and their trajectory curves, always, toward that moment or moments in which we experience absolute solitude. *The Second Circle* (1990) is about the death of a father, *Days of Eclipse* (1988) about a suicide. *Stone* (1992) takes place at what appears to be a Chekhov museum and involves discussion between a young man, the curator or caretaker, and an older man (Chekhov himself?). *Whispering Pages* (1994) returns us to a Dostoyevskian St. Petersburg; *Oriental Elegy* (1990) takes us to a village on a Japanese island and how old people see their lives ending. *Les Voix de l'âme* (1996) contrasts Mozart with four people's experience of war. *Save and Protect* (1989), Sokurov's best-known film, is his adaptation of *Madame Bovary,* and if that means a film about love or what passes for it, death is never far away in his heroine's doomed rush toward romantic fulfillment. *Confession* (1998), his most recent film, is the story of a naval ship on the Murmansk run in which Arctic seas and subzero temperatures threaten any mistake in the deadly daily routine.

It is in the daily routine and repetition which we have long ceased to notice or see, which we find trivial and inconsequential, that we find the meaning of our lives. In *The Second Circle,* the dead father's son is consumed by discussions with the undertaker, endless questions with endless officials for filling out the death certificate, by washing the corpse, angling the coffin down intransigent staircases. In the background, an insistent radio will not shut up. In *Confession,* there is the endless and dulling daily routine of life on board ship. There must be the daily repetition of watch, inspection, instruction, chores. Survival, not significance, is at issue. Why, the captain wonders in overtones of Melville and Conrad, do his sailors accept their servitude and deadening routine with such good grace and without protest? The story of our lives is not the once-upon-a-time narrative of convention, and Sokurov must tell it, however he can, by lifting the veil of art. The stillness at the end of *Mother and Son* resonates in our minds like the last moment on earth, and the first.

Sokurov was born in 1951 in a Siberian village that no longer exists (a hydroelectric power station buried it underwater), the son of a professional soldier, and spent much of his youth on the move, including stays in Poland and Turkmenistan. In 1968, he began studying history at the University of Gorki (now Nizhni Novogorod), while also working as an assistant director in television. ("All the skills I have at the moment," he comments, "I learned from my first job in

The son carries his mother on his last visit.

television."[4]) He went on to study directing at the Moscow Film School, but did not finish. Between 1980 and 1987, he made two feature films and six documentaries, none of which passed the censor, but not because of their political content. The film commissars just did not understand them, and could not approve them for fear they were missing something. Tarkovsky and others spoke out Sokurov's behalf, and since 1987 his films have been shown, although even today he is little known in Russia, despite having produced more than 30 features and documentaries. "The feeling is that today, for the state and the majority of people," Sokurov comments, "culture is not a requirement."[5] It is no surprise that his work is financed, for the most part, by German and Japanese grants. (His films have been released on video in Japan, and posters in Paris read, "Sokurov is a genius.")

In his apartment in St. Petersburg, one sees the Bay of Finland from the window, a fireplace Sokurov himself made, birds in cages, books on shelves. One hears the music of Wagner, Scarlatti, Tchaikovsky. There are no contemporary writers on his shelves, and he reads mainly the classic Russian writers, particularly Chekhov, and the great Modernists, Flaubert, Faulkner. Thus, like Tarkovsky and Solzhenitsyn, his two countrymen, he weds a nineteenth-century sensibility to twentieth-century methods.

Sokurov's films seem unfinished, inconclusive, almost, at times, amateurish. They discard or disregard conventional film practice. Sound tracks are not always coordinated, use of color not natural, the image sometimes faint, often distorted, or, as at the end of *Mother and Son,* absent. Everything is pared down, stripped away. (In *Stone,* pauses in conversation were so long that when a character finally spoke, some in the audience laughed.) Here is a skepticism about film so profound, so fundamental—a skepticism that comes only from years of seeing films—that it says the only way to make films honestly and purely is to resist facility, finish, closure. It is precisely their lack of finish which is decisive. Sokurov uses the camera to underline what it cannot do and thus open space for what it can.

All serious art, Modernism says, resists art. Or goes beyond it, under it, to its side. It is no accident that Sokurov looks back to Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Mozart, Chekhov; to the past, and dying. The practice of Pound, Tarkovsky, Eliot was to make art new by returning to the old. The dark screen at the end of *Mother and Son* is directive: We must begin film where it ends.

Robert Buckeye is Abernethy Curator of American Literature at Middlebury College; he has published fiction, reviews, and articles on twentieth-century writing and art as well as on film.

Notes

1. Interview with Alexander Sokurov, by Paul Schrader, *Film Comment,* vol. 33, no. 6 (November–December 1997), 23.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 25.
4. Ibid., 21.
5. From a translation by James Mantooth of an interview with Sokurov in St. Petersburg. Source not known.

Annual *Film Quarterly* Film Book Survey

PART I

Cracks in the Pedestal

Ideology and Gender in Hollywood

By Philip Green. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998. $55.00 cloth; $17.95 paper.

According to Philip Green, by reflecting society, Hollywood influences society; and by Hollywood, Green means both films produced in Hollywood and for U.S. television. In *Cracks in the Pedestal: Ideology and Gender in Hollywood,* Green goes into extraordinary detail to show that Hollywood has found a way of recuperating the threat posed by social changes following on from the incorporation of feminist goals and economic realities into U.S. culture. At the same time that he laments the slow pace of change in Hollywood's representation of women, families, and gender issues generally, he nonetheless identifies some small signs of hope.

Classifying his work as "neo-Marxian," he writes that it therefore "necessarily falls outside the mainstream of American feminist cultural studies in general, and feminist film studies in particular" (4). His references, though—in a work that is massively footnoted—call on a panoply of sources that most people would include in either feminist cultural studies or feminist film studies or both.

For example, he both builds on and critiques Laura Mulvey's germinal analysis of Hollywood cinema. There's nothing unusual about this on the part of analysts writing about film, except perhaps Green's original disavowal of such a context ("because [his] purpose is to characterize the ideological aspect of an entire cultural domain" [2]). What he wants to know is whether it is possible to surpass the limits of a male-dominated ideology "in a visual culture so totally dominated by men" (156).

While he is occasionally at pains to distinguish between material produced for the cinema and for television, as well as the spectator's experience of each, ultimately he tends to blur the two media: "What commercial television reveals, even more decisively than cinema, is Hollywood's own ideology" (116). So he finds positive points about each, although his underlying point of view is condemnatory of both. Like Mulvey in her original analysis, he seems to have written off the elements of pleasure that draw most of us to watch. He might justify this, though, by saying that "this is a book about what cinema and television are saying to people, more than it is about what people are learning from them" (3). There's no blur in his consistent approval for visual material produced outside the U.S., in contrast with that produced by Hollywood, especially in his higher opinion of British television. HBO, for example, gets praised for its similarities to BBC TV (fn. 1, 235).

Yet, like Elayne Rapping, whom he sometimes cites approvingly, he thinks that television has responded more broadly and openly than have feature films to cultural changes instigated by feminist activism; unlike her, though, he is less optimistic about the Movie of the Week brand of social realism. What he praises is the risk-taking that television tolerates better since it can develop niche markets and since its production costs per item tend to be less than the typical Hollywood investment (142).

Both Hollywood and then, imitatively, television, Green argues, have "colonized" material, even genres, produced outside the mainstream—martial arts films, exploitation-grade rape-revenge films, and neo-films noirs—in which "resistance, ambiguities, [and] ambivalences" appear to challenge dominant ideology. He claims that the difference between his analysis and that of "cultural critics whose focus is more

on the allegedly unproblematic reproduction and strengthening of cultural hegemony" is his recognition of "conditions prominently structured by the feminist cultural revolution of the 1970s" (2).

Green divides his book into a first part in which he establishes the fact that dominant—i.e., U.S.—visual culture is ideologically guilty of sustaining bad old images of sexual identity and gendered relations. The second half explores challenges from within to these dominant images; these are the cracks in the pedestal to which his title refers. His acknowledgments speak of this book's origins in a decade of teaching the material to undergraduates at Smith College, where Green is Sophia Smith Professor of Government. Yet the material covered, the manner of covering it, and the style of referring to student responses suggest that *Cracks* is not a book for the typical undergraduate reader, certainly not in the U.S. Its analysis is far too complex and convoluted, on the one hand, and too incomplete and unsophisticated, on the other. The Marxian framework as an analysis of dominant media is too familiar for advanced scholars to warrant the time Green spends on establishing his point. Yet his discussion of how dominant media achieve their effects ignores much of the debates on these points that have dominated film and media studies for decades.

It seemed tempting, at first, to understand *Cracks* as another example of the sort of snapshot analysis of a group of visual products from a given era in relation to their historical moment of production. This would seem to be an increasingly popular genre, perhaps resulting from the lack of outlets for advanced, educated critical responses to the media—and the academic pressures to publish whole books. There is no denying the wealth of references Green commands, both in terms of print and visual texts.

There are some curiosities of tone about *Cracks.* There are far too many footnotes, even for the most tolerant of avid footnote readers; for example, Green constantly interrupts his text to let us know that he has already discussed or will be discussing a closely related point elsewhere in the text. Apart from Green's apparent confusion about his audience—student or advanced scholar, political science or film/media scholar—he also includes the most extraordinary introductory acknowledgment to a student assistant that I've ever seen. Apparently Gina Rourke, the student in question, not only contributed examples from her own viewing experience, but took an inchoate manuscript and reworked it as if it "were in part her own," leading Green to conclude that "so it is" (viii). One has to wonder, if that is the case, why she hasn't been given greater credit on the title page.

There is much of interest in *Cracks in the Pedestal,* not least for students looking for commentary on popular contemporary films in book form (i.e., which is more accessible in these days of tight library budgets than are essays in journals). In many ways, though, the most interesting aspects of Green's argument would be clearer and more persuasive if they were presented in pared-down form, no matter how long the resultant essay turned out to be.

Harriet Margolis is a senior lecturer in film at Victoria University of Wellington, and an editorial board member for *Screening the Past.* She is also the editor of the forthcoming *Jane Campion's* "The Piano" (Cambridge University Press).

The Book Review section of *FQ* is a vital part of the journal and one that our readers, as they tell us, especially value. We are the only journal that tries to review all major scholarly film-related books. We have no theoretical or ideological ax to grind and pride ourselves on representing a variety of viewpoints. Because we regularly cover so many books, we always need qualified writers. If you would like to be considered as a book reviewer, please let us know your areas of interest and relevant qualifications, background, or experience. Send this information to Stephen Prince, *FQ* Book Review Editor, Dept. of Communication Studies, Virginia Tech, 11 Agnew Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0311. Fax: 540-231-9817. Email: sprince@vt.edu

The Exploding Eye

A Re-visionary History of 1960s American Experimental Cinema

By Wheeler Winston Dixon. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997. $57.50 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Wheeler Winston Dixon's goal in *The Exploding Eye: A Revisionary History of 1960s American Experimental Cinema* is a noble one. In a brief (barely five-page) introduction, Dixon outlines his desire for a "work of recovery and regeneration" which will call attention to "those filmmakers whose works have escaped into the phantom zone of the absent signifier." Himself an experimental filmmaker, critic, and first-hand participant in the New York alternative film scene of the 1960s, Dixon seems like a logical person to undertake such a revision, to challenge existing canons and construct a new history which hews close to the intentions, words, and films of the innumerable unsung artists of this extraordinarily fertile period in experimental cinema. Unfortunately, while Dixon's book may serve as a useful handbook on selected filmmakers who have slipped through the cracks of history, it fails to address any of the most compelling questions about how and why such cracks and canons are formed and ultimately does not live up to either its historical promise or revisionist aspirations.

The book is structured as a series of encyclopedia-style entries ranging from one sentence to several pages on some 150 filmmakers, arranged alphabetically by the artist's last name. The entries are largely cut-and-pasted from a variety of sources, including reviews, interviews (conducted by Dixon himself), and, most frequently, descriptions from the Canyon Cinema and Filmmakers' Co-op catalogs. In his aversion to imposing an "external ideological grid" (2), Dixon produces a disjunctive and unsatisfying kind of history which remains as idiosyncratic and incomplete as any previous work

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while lacking any sense of context or historical interpretation. He explains this as a desire to avoid creating an "artificially unified narrative" (4), choosing instead an artificially fragmented one. In spite of its central role in some of the greatest works of experimental film (e.g., Hollis Frampton's *Zorn's Lemma,* Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim*), the alphabet simply does not provide an effective structural framework for a work of history, particularly one which proposes a historical intervention. After Foucault and Hayden White, Dixon's belief that it is possible to avoid ideology, authorial presence, and narrative in a work of history seems anachronistic and naive.

The most consistently interesting parts of the book are the excerpts from interviews with filmmakers conducted by the author in the late 1960s. Dixon also interestingly draws attention to numerous individuals who are not known primarily as filmmakers—or experimental filmmakers—including, for example, Greg Sharits, whose programming work at the Filmmakers' Cinematheque was largely overshadowed by the films of his brother, Paul Sharits. However, within the same chapter, Dixon entirely neglects Adolfas Mekas in favor of *his* more famous brother, Jonas. Perhaps most disappointingly, Dixon's attempt to write women artists back into the history of experimental film is inconsistent almost to the point of irresponsibility. While he includes brief but useful entries for filmmakers such as Madeline Anderson and Sara Kathryn Arledge, the critically and historically neglected Chick Strand, who, in addition to her prolific film work throughout the 1960s, participated in the founding of Canyon Cinema, is entirely absent from Dixon's book.

Apart from including his own historically neglected film work in the book, Dixon seems to think that it is not only possible but desirable to write a history that is free of authorial presence and commentary. But, as his book and the above examples illustrate, history can never be objective; authorship is not omniscient. It is unfortunate that Dixon's "re-visioning" refuses to engage directly with any of the most important histories and revisions of American experimental cinema of the past three decades, including P. Adams Sitney's *Visionary Film,* David James' *Allegories of Cinema* (which is not even mentioned in the bibliography), and James Peterson's *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order.* In spite of his claim to personal, experiential authority, the extensive use of catalog quotations makes it unclear whether or not Dixon has even seen many of the films in question. He claims this is his way of allowing the filmmakers to speak for themselves, but is this really the best—or most interesting—way to provide access to an unfamiliar body of film work? History writing is a contested terrain which is and ought to be subject to continual renegotiation and revision. While Dixon's book contributes some useful additions to a generally underresearched field within Film Studies, it shies away from the very things which make the history of the avant-garde worth thinking about.

Steve Anderson is a filmmaker and doctoral candidate in Film, Literature and Culture at the University of Southern California who writes about historiography, television, and the avant-garde.

French Cinema in the 1980s

Nostalgia and the Crisis of Masculinity

By Phil Powrie. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. $67.50 cloth; $16.95 paper.

Phil Powrie's *French Cinema in the 1980s* is clear in its purpose, consistent in its method, and straightforward in its style. As Powrie explains in his preface, his book is not strictly a history of the French cinema's "crisis state" in the 1980s, but rather a set of critical essays focusing on the theme of "the crisis of masculinity in contemporary French culture, and its interrelationship with nostalgia" (viii). He isolates three broad genres of French cinema as pertinent sources for evidence of the shifts in representations of French masculinity and gender roles. Those genres include "nostalgia" films, which lament the loss of a past, patriarchal security; the "polars," or detective films (from a popular abbreviation for "film policier" derived from "roman policier," or detective story), which revolve around conflicts between the individual and the law; and comedies that center on redefining men's functions in contemporary society. The book is divided into three large sections based on these genres and has chapters devoted to 13 specific films as test cases. As he moves through sample films and genres, Powrie constantly returns to the ties between the economic and aesthetic crises in mainstream cinema and the uncertainty French male characters face in an increasingly feminist world.

Powrie justifies his project by asserting that the 1980s are pivotal years distinguished by a painful realignment of masculinity in France. He cites an influential book by Elizabeth Badinter, *XY: De l'identité masculine,* which argues that social changes were forcing men "to repress traditionally masculine traits without anything to replace them, hence the crisis." (11). Powrie argues that the films he studies, and especially his selected genres, "place the spectator firmly within that crisis by processes of identification." But his definition of "identification" could be spelled out more fully, since it seems to encompass everything from specifically psychoanalytic processes to the use of point-of-view shots. Perhaps reference to Murray Smith's exemplary work on identification would help make the term less abstract and more functional here. Nor is it always clear to what extent Powrie sympathizes with the modern male in crisis (is this a "male studies" book?) or to what extent he is mocking him (is this a "feminist" book?). Regardless, Powrie remains organized around proving that each of the films he has selected reveals deep crises in masculinity while the female characters contribute to and/or suffer from these crises.

Powrie's first section on the nostalgia film defines this genre partly in reference to Andrew Higson's work on 1980s British "heritage" costume dramas. The genre does offer Powrie a strong selection of films to work with, but he is somewhat uncertain of how narrowly he can or should define the genre. In its purest state, the nostalgia film recreates a very particular historical period with high production values, and the subject of the film becomes the past itself. Powrie's central examples are the international coproduction

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Un amour de Swann (*Swann in Love,* Schlöndorff, 1984), *Un dimanche à la campagne* (*A Sunday in the Country*, Tavernier, 1984), *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des sources* (Berri, 1986), and *Coup de foudre/Entre nous* (Kurys, 1983). Powrie acknowledges that some other films may on the surface seem more appropriate for study, but argues that not all literary adaptations are by definition nostalgic, and he further clarifies the genre by categorizing some historical films as nostalgic (*Coup de torchon, The Return of Martin Guerre*), while others set in the past (*The Name of the Rose, La Passion Béatrice*) are not. Nostalgia is also connected here with depressive masochism, in part based on work by Melanie Klein. Powrie finds thematic and intertextual cues for proving that this genre is based on a longing for the past, which ultimately becomes a contradictory, ambivalent mix of Oedipal crisis and nostalgia for the father.

The second genre, the polar film, is easier to define and often more obvious for how its male representations parallel the crises of masculinity in contemporary culture. As Powrie explains, the French police thriller is historically indebted to popular literature as well as American gangster and noir films, so it becomes a lively testing ground for nostalgia, intertextuality, and representations of the "discomfited male." The key films discussed are *Vivement dimanche* (Truffaut, 1983), *Détective* (Godard, 1985), *Police* (Pialat, 1985), *La Balance* (Swaim, 1982), and then a separate subset comprised of *Diva* (Beineix, 1980), *Subway* (Besson, 1985), and *Mauvais sang* (Carax, 1986). This list provides a wide range of male and female roles, though he seems unconvincing in reducing the complex *Détective* to a genre tale about the Johnny Hallyday character's loss. *Vivement dimanche* is important to Powrie's arguments about the genre since it is "riven apart" or fractured by multiple and competing intertextual references. Further, there is a conflict between the "dominant male narrative style of the genre" and the attempt to give Fanny Ardant's character the dominant narrative position. In the end, this film is exemplary for Powrie since it raises the possibility of a strong woman but then returns her to a minimal role, a pattern he will find in a number of the films discussed. None of these polars, according to Powrie, offer radical breaks with the past, but rather reveal symptoms of the French cinema's attempts to redefine male roles in often ambivalent ways.

Part of Powrie's goal in this section is to reclaim the glitzy "cinéma du look" films *Diva* and *Subway.* Powrie argues that their intertextual irony and excess are sophisticated attempts to forge a vital new aesthetic in the face of postmodern uncertainty, and as a result they do attain vibrant ideological force. Their placement in the book also suggests that they provide a sort of bridge to the more postmodern and critically successful *Mauvais sang.* Occasionally, however, Powrie's insistence on returning to psychoanalytic sources to anchor his arguments produces rather unconvincing conclusions. The discussion of *Mauvais sang* applies Powrie's own concerns with those of Frank Krutnik to uncover central themes of voyeurism, masochism, individuality pitted against the Law, and Oedipal struggles. However, Powrie reduces Carax's wildly stylized art film to a simple nostalgic tribute to film noir. Moreover, while many intertextual references and postmodern traits are referred to, Powrie argues that intertextuality is by definition nostalgic, and that Carax's film, which "explodes and collapses with references to other texts," is nonetheless longing "for a golden age of cinema" (133). He repeatedly points out that these 1980s films are ambivalent, and that ambivalence is a key signifier of the crisis in masculinity and its representation.

Within his section on the comic film, Powrie concentrates on three hugely successful exports: *Trois hommes et un couffin* (*Three Men and a Cradle*) (Serreau, 1985), *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (*Life Is a Long Quiet River*) (Chatiliez, 1987), and *Tenue de soirée* (*Ménage/Evening Dress*) (Blier, 1986.) These popular comedies are ideal for Powrie's final section, since they help prove "the rule which underlines this book: that 1980s French film is obsessively concerned with repositioning men, and keeping women in their place" (159). Within *Three Men and a Cradle,* Powrie outlines the contradictory aspects of this film which articulates changing gender roles (with nurturing men in a homosocial and homoerotic setting), yet also works to marginalize women. Similarly, *Life Is a Long Quiet River* humbles and derides the mothers, and *Tenue de soirée* also fails to put in place strong or even useful women characters. His conclusion suggests that while the 1980s films "dwell on the discomfiture of the male," perhaps Claire Devers' *Noir et blanc* (1986), the last film mentioned in the book, indicates that French films in the 1990s will have ethnicity and difference as their main concerns.

Despite a clear style, there are several unfortunate errors; most embarrassing is that just after criticizing a *Télérama* reviewer for confusing Hitchcock's *Saboteur* with *Sabotage,* Powrie writes, "In the case of *Vertigo,* the central character is confined to a wheelchair and tended by two women. . ." (84). But *French Cinema in the 1980s* does end with a very useful list of the roughly 75 films mentioned in the book, with information on their attendance, length of run, and ranking for their respective years. Further, it has a solid bibliography and index, making it a very useful reference text. Finally, while the film selections are not always convincing, they will engage the reader to reconsider 1980s French films for how they do or do not address the issues Powrie raises. But the decision to employ three large genres to discuss a national cinema that is composed of so many "nongenre" films will perhaps leave some readers unsettled. Further, in the end, this entertaining and engaging book still fails to convince me that the 1980s as a decade is that different from previous decades, especially based on the sorts of issues Powrie raises. I find myself asking whether Jean Gabin's famous 1930s roles might also be about "male discomfiture," and whether Godard's *Breathless,* Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player,* or Blier's *Going Places* might not have been substituted comfortably for *Détective, Vivement dimanche,* and *Tenue de soirée* without compromising Powrie's overall arguments about masculinity in crisis. But either way, this book does motivate readers to rethink and reconsider France and its fascinating 1980s film output.

Richard Neupert teaches in the Department of Drama at the University of Georgia.

Girls' Own Stories

Australian and New Zealand Women's Films

By Jocelyn Robson and Beverley Zalcock. London: Scarlet Press, 1997.

"There's something Australasian going on among women's film." With this quotation from Gaylene Preston, the senior figure among Kiwi women directors, Jocelyn Robson and Beverley Zalcock begin their study of an extraordinary body of work: the shorts and feature films produced by Antipodean women since the late 1970s.

The authors have taken a diverse body of work by an even more diverse group of women—Aborigines, Maori, established and new immigrants from Europe and elsewhere to Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand—and found a coherent way to understand its origins and appreciate its similarities as well as differences. Robson and Zalcock deliberately exclude from their study documentary and animation films, a significant but understandable omission, and their selection of dramatic works is shaped by their perception of common genres and thematic concerns. Using the Australian government's initiative in the 1970s to foster a national film industry to counter U.S. cultural influences as their starting point, they see the films in question as belonging within their national contexts, both specific to their countries of origin (with "a constant exchange of ideas and talent across the Tasman" [7]) and reactive to Hollywood dominance.

Perhaps the fact that Zalcock is English, Robson a New Zealander and that both reside in London enables them to see clear and simple outlines by which to situate these films. That they have seen them in the first place is remarkable. Both countries have supported shorts as a training ground for feature filmmaking and many of them, as well as some of the feature films, are available from Women Make Movies in New York, but they are largely unavailable even to avid filmgoers except through festival appearances and the odd TV screening.

Because government-subsidized funding has deemphasized commercial considerations, Antipodean women have been freer, relatively speaking, than their Hollywood counterparts to explore their own subject matter and sensibilities. Robson and Zalcock identify three "major preoccupations: the family, the landscape and ethnicity" (6). These are not uncommon subjects in male-produced films, but "it is as if the [women] film-makers were exploring the things that have always been omitted from the prevailing cultural myths" (7). The difference between films from the two countries, according to Robson and Zalcock, is "the Australian concern with suburban experience and with young girls growing up in damaging families," while New Zealanders have developed a "feminist psychodrama . . . allied to the psychological thriller" (8). Filmmakers in both countries explore gender identity and gendered relations, thereby inflecting dominant representations of a unified national identity.

A chapter on Gillian Armstrong's *My Brilliant Career* (1979) sets up further discussion of Australian developments, while a chapter on Melanie Read's *Trial Run* (1984)—"billed as the first feminist feature produced in New Zealand" (19)—allows the same for Aotearoa New Zealand. The notion of a feminist psychodrama does not originate with them, but Robson and Zalcock develop the idea into a useful and persuasive concept as they show its workings from *Trial Run* through better-known films that followed from Gaylene Preston (*Mr. Wrong,* 1985), Alison Maclean (*Kitchen Sink,* 1989), and Jane Campion (*Sweetie,* 1989), among others.

A subsequent chapter on short films from both countries again notes the common importance of short film production for women's access to the industry along with distinguishing characteristics of the two bodies of work. Australian shorts divide, according to Robson and Zalcock, into films "informed by feminism (both in terms of activism and theory)" and films exploring form as a point of access to "feminist identity within the family" (33); New Zealand shorts again are characterized as psychodramas. I can't speak to the Australian shorts, but in Aotearoa New Zealand there's a growing body of work by, for example, Maori women that expands the range of thematic and generic offerings (e.g., Christine Parker's *Hinekaro Goes on a Picnic and Blows Up Another Obelisk,* 1994). This chapter is also marred by two factual errors: Armstrong, not Campion, was enrolled in the Australian Film and Television School's first group of students in 1973–1974; and Gaylene Preston did not begin making films as a Christchurch art student, but rather as a staff member at an English hospital using art for therapeutic purposes.

The authors' chapter on "other identities" ignores the limitations of their earlier framework and does justice, within the scale of this slender volume, to two groundbreaking indigenous filmmakers of both countries (Tracy Moffat and Merata Mita). Chapters on the "child's-eye view," "celluloid sisters," and "disrupting the family" develop previously identified themes, while "Women Displaced" looks at the phenomenon of "women directors [Armstrong and Campion] returning to their native countries after periods of successful filmmaking elsewhere" (97) and "The Wave Rolls On" sums up, with further development, the book's thesis.

The films covered by Robson and Zalcock are extraordinary and the authors' analysis is both helpful and provocative. *Girls' Own Stories* is as timely as the films themselves.

Harriet Margolis is a senior lecturer in film at Victoria University of Wellington, and an editorial board member for *Screening the Past.* She is also the editor of the forthcoming *Jane Campion's* "The Piano" (Cambridge University Press).

Hong Kong Cinema

The Extra Dimensions

By Stephen Teo. London: BFI Publishing, 1997. $60.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.

Stephen Teo's long-awaited work on Hong Kong cinema provides the reader with a broad survey of this exciting national cinema from the beginning to its present uncertain status, concentrating on the post-World War II period. Since

Girls' Own Stories

Australian and New Zealand Women's Films

By Jocelyn Robson and Beverley Zalcock. London: Scarlet Press, 1997.

"There's something Australasian going on among women's film." With this quotation from Gaylene Preston, the senior figure among Kiwi women directors, Jocelyn Robson and Beverley Zalcock begin their study of an extraordinary body of work: the shorts and feature films produced by Antipodean women since the late 1970s.

The authors have taken a diverse body of work by an even more diverse group of women—Aborigines, Maori, established and new immigrants from Europe and elsewhere to Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand—and found a coherent way to understand its origins and appreciate its similarities as well as differences. Robson and Zalcock deliberately exclude from their study documentary and animation films, a significant but understandable omission, and their selection of dramatic works is shaped by their perception of common genres and thematic concerns. Using the Australian government's initiative in the 1970s to foster a national film industry to counter U.S. cultural influences as their starting point, they see the films in question as belonging within their national contexts, both specific to their countries of origin (with "a constant exchange of ideas and talent across the Tasman" [7]) and reactive to Hollywood dominance.

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reliable information has usually been confined to the indispensable Hong Kong Film Festival catalogs, a book for a mainstream publisher by one of the major festival critics has been sorely needed.

Teo's work comprises 16 chapters divided into four parts: "Northerners and Southerners," "Martial Artists," "Path Breakers," and "Characters on the Edge." The chapters supply vital information on the influential world of Shanghai cinema; directors such as, among many others, King Hu, Zhang Che, Michael Hui, John Woo, Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam, Ann Hui, and Ching Siu-tung; Mandarin and Cantonese influences; the China factor; supernatural films; fictional and docudramatic gangster films; and supposed postmodernist tendencies in contemporary Hong Kong cinema. Stressing important links to the golden age of 30s Shanghai cinema, Teo emphasizes his project as involving "a proper critical and historical perspective on Hong Kong cinema" (x). He also takes issue with certain Western postmodernist tendencies defining a dynamically rich cinema as "anti-intellectual, non-historical, non-political, and without discourse of whatever shade" (xi). His project is to set the record straight.

Teo regards an understanding of the crucial role of prewar Mainland Chinese cinema, especially Shanghai, as indispensable for understanding later Hong Kong productions. The past has influenced the present in dynamically culturally discursive ways. From 1946 on, many Shanghai directors took over Hong Kong's Mandarin cinema, seeing in it "at least, in aesthetic terms, a carbon copy of Shanghai" (14). As well as noting the presence of Shanghai directors such as Cai Chusheng in this period and the conflict between left and right tendencies, Teo emphasizes the role of Shanghai "Orphan Island" talent such as director Yue Feng and actress Li Lihua (known to Western audiences for her role in King Hu's *The Fate of Lee Khan*). Yue's actresses anticipated later Hong Kong screen heroines in "exuding strength of character underneath a veneer of feminine charm" and embarking "on a quest for social understanding and, above all, equal relationships with men" (21). Teo sets the record straight by showing that early postwar Hong Kong cinema also borrowed from Hollywood, especially the melodramas of Frank Borzage and Douglas Sirk. The Western borrowings most critics confine to modern productions were key historical components of this national cinema. But like later developments, these borrowings were designed to "modernise" Chinese cinema by weaving them into a distinctively cultural cinematic context.

The second chapter examines the role of actresses such as Li Lihua, Li Mei, and Lily Ho and their relationship to the "sing-song" girl of musicals and comedies noted by ex-Shanghai resident, novelist, and future Hong Kong scenarist Eileen Chang. Eclectic Mandarin melodramatic and musical genres not only influenced Tsui Hark's *Cantonese Shanghai Blues* (1984) and *Peking Opera Blues* (1986) but also the performance of Anita Mui in *Rouge* (1989).

Teo's following chapters on martial arts directors and actors are no less compelling. He applauds and criticizes the work of director King Hu, but cautions that earlier Western tendencies hailing him as a unique genius resulted from lack of information concerning the crucial period of 50s and 60s Hong Kong Mandarin cinema influencing his films. The work of Zhang Che in developing the *wuxia* (martial arts) hero during a period of developing Chinese superpower status receives sympathetic consideration. Teo astutely regards *Golden Swallow* (1968) as Che's masterpiece—"a baroque-poetic advance on Hu's achievement" (100) in *Come Drink with Me* (1966)—in its non-romantic treatment of "the nature of heroism and the obligations of heroes." But if Che's work deserves rediscovery, attention should also be paid to important cultural elements in the films of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. While Western critics often dismiss these artists as purveyors of mindless camp, Teo asserts the crucial presence of Chinese nationalism in their films. He takes issue with Tony Rayns' Western definition of narcissism in Lee's films by pointing out the neglected component of cultural *tianxia* (Chinese nationalism) motivating Lee's work. Teo applauds Chan's 80s films as being "practically alone in preserving Bruce Lee's tradition of kung fu as an instinctive but disciplined art linked to a cultural and national identity" (122), albeit in a different manner. "Chan's personal style and his attempts at dramatic characterizations are mitigating factors distinguishing a genre all too often consigned to the trash bin of cinematic criticism" (133).

Succeeding chapters deal with the various New Waves of Hong Kong cinema. As well as welcoming the artistry of directors such as John Woo, Tsui Hark, Clara Law, Michael Hui, Allen Fong, and others (especially the unjustly forgotten Tung Shuxuan), Teo also sees the importance of the relationship between the present and a past not generally available to Western critics. Teo notes the debt John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* owes to Lung Kong's *Story of a Discharged Prisoner* (1967) as well as the important moral dimension in the director's films (a dimension absent in the work of Mr. Tarantino and countless other imitators). Teo also pertinently cites the *Film Threat* exposure of the relationship between Ringo Lam's *City on Fire* and *Reservoir Dogs* (241, n.2), and notes the problematic and inaccurate anti-Communist features tarnishing Ann Hui's 1982 *The Boat People* (217–18). Furthermore, Teo states that gender-bender features so beloved by Western gay and postmodernist critics are actually traditional in nature.

Hong Kong Cinema is a rich and informative work in many ways. It argues for the crucial importance of understanding what may appear novel in relation to key components of past culture. Hong Kong's cinematic relationship to the Mainland has always existed in one form or another and should not be limited to apocalyptic 1997 definitions. For example, Stanley Kwan's *Actress* (aka *Center Stage,* 1991) not only celebrates the role of the great Chinese actress Ruan Lingyu, but is also an intertextual examination of several layers of Chinese cinema.

Finally, as Hong Kong cinema enters an era of uncertainty challenged by American blockbusters and low box-office returns for local product, Teo attempts to define the "role of what may look like postmodernism and the context from which it developed" (243). Focussing on the

diverse figures of Tsui Hark and comedian Stephen Chiau Sing-chi, Teo argues that Hong Kong cinema contains its own form of postmodernism but one which may not parallel or conform to Western precepts. It is one showing "Hong Kong society reacting against cultural uniformity, a postmodernism that is also profoundly anti-postmodernist (or post-modern)" (245). The concept involves a cinematic leap into a postmodern phase without ever having been fully modern, "a natural outcome of the maturation of the new wave and its absorption of commercial precepts" (246). For Teo, "Chiau is the archetypal postmodern (con)man, his screen persona conveying that a society has successfully side-stepped or leapt over stages of orthodox development and a new generation has come of age faster and smarter" (246).

The general reader and specialist of Hong Kong cinema will find much valuable information in this book. It will, hopefully, lead not only to the appearance of specialist works developing the themes of Teo's individual chapters but also a call for the reissue of many of the films discussed in the book. (Teo points out that recent Hong Kong moves toward film preservation are crucial in revealing the whole story.) These will not just involve fresh letterboxed reissues of the films of Zhang Che, King Hu, and other well-known names but also key Mandarin and Cantonese works of the 50s and 60s which influenced the films of a later generation.

Tony Williams is Associate Professor and Area Head of Film Studies in the Department of English, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

The Image

By Jacques Aumont. Trans. Claire Pajackowska. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press/BFI, 1997. $60.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.

Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine

By David N. Rodowick. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997. $49.95 cloth; $16.95 paper.

Jacques Aumont has been responsible for a regular output of books on cinema and visual aesthetics for almost 20 years in France, of which only one, *Aesthetics of Film,* had previously been translated into English (by Richard Neupert, University of Texas Press, 1992). His works include studies on Eisenstein (1989) and Dreyer (1993), showing shared interests with American film scholar David Bordwell. *The Image,* originally published in French in 1990 and revised in 1994, is inspired by the ever increasing proliferation of audiovisual images in contemporary Western society. It does not pretend to be a work of synthesis, but rather "to remain at a general level of conceptualisation without theorising in depth on any particular form of imagery" (2).

The Image is structured around five main questions. Firstly, Aumont asks, What does it mean to see an image? He describes the fundamental perceptive processes which produce vision, from the stimulus of light on the retina to its chemical conversion into neural pulses and their journey through the optic nerve to the "striated cortex" at the back of the brain, which is where we see. Aumont shows how the popularly held notion that the appearance of movement in cinema can be explained by retinal persistance is false and results from very different optical processes. It is known as the phi effect, discovered in 1912 by Wertheimer and correctly hypothesized then as resulting from post-retinal processes. Still unresolved is whether real movement and apparent movement have the same receptors. Aumont also examines the two main theoretical approaches to visual perception. The analytic approach, whose early practitioners include Berkeley and Hjelmslev, analyzes the physiological mechanisms of vision by light and attempts to relate these to real perceptual experience. The synthetic approach works in the opposite direction. It includes Gestalt theory and, more recently, the work of J. J. Gibson.

Next the focus turns to the spectator: Who watches the image? What do images mean? How are they seen? Aumont begins with the premise that the production of images is rarely gratuitous, that in all societies one can find a specific purpose behind their existence: propaganda, religion, ideology. This means that most images are endowed with a symbolic value; they are points of mediation between the spectator and reality (54). Aumont confronts several theories on the spectator. Ernst Gombrich studied the perceptual and psychic processes by which the spectator mentally completes an image, which must necessarily only ever be partial. Rudolf Arnheim and the Gestalt theorists argued that the structures a spectator could find in the image matched deeper structures of the mind. Eisenstein believed that the image is structured like "inner speech," a term he used as synonymous with thought itself. Concepts of realism, representation, illusion, and simulacrum reveal how sociohistorical and cultural forces mold expectations and, therefore, interpretations. Aumont finds that the plethora of hypotheses does not allow for any definite conclusions about image spectatorship, but points to the potential for developing this area of study more fully as an anthropology of the image.

Thirdly, Aumont looks at the technologies of image production: How is the relationship between the image and the spectator regulated? Aumont examines the hypothesis put forward by Jean-Marie Schaeffer, who argued, in 1987, that the interpretation of an image is directly affected by the spectator's knowledge of its genesis. (Someone who does not know how a photograph is produced will not know what its use is, and therefore will have difficulty understanding it.) Recent ethnographic studies demonstrate that when the production process of an image is explained to someone, they will simultaneously understand its use. This observation is very significant in showing the importance of the apparatus and its function in the spectator-image relationship.

But apparatus does not only refer to the mechanical aspects of image production, it also refers to the ideological structures which, according to Jean-Louis Comolli, play a greater role than technology. Jacques Aumont is critical of the virtual disappearance of the ideological debates in

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explicating the relationship between the spectator and the image. He believes that too many sociological studies of the image ignore the relevance of the apparatus as a psychological and social machine, preferring to concentrate on content.

In the last chapters, Aumont investigates the role of the image and its claim to represent reality, discussing the interpretation of the image in the light of studies by Deleuze, Metz, and Panofsky, and investigates why some images are classified as art, examining in particular Expressionism in painting and early cinema, both because of its explicit goal of going beyond the mere representation of the objective world and because of its multiple manifestations.

The Image provides a well-informed overview of the contemporary state of theories on all major forms of visual images and points to the many areas which offer potential for further investigation. It does not look at the image outside of Western concepts but neither is it overly Francocentric. Written by a lecturer and researcher in cinema of some 30 years experience, it is an ideal reference text equally for students and for researchers.

D. N. Rodowick's *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* is much more specialized and introduces the cinema theories of one of France's most influential contemporary philosophers to an English-speaking readership. Deleuze, who died in 1995, wrote two books specifically dedicated to analyzing the cinematographic image in depth and cataloguing its particular characteristics. The first volume, *Cinéma 1: L'Image-mouvement,* was published in 1983 (in English as *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image,* 1986) and provides a theory of classical narrative cinema. The second, *Cinéma 2: L'Image-temps,* was published in 1985 (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* 1989) and hypothesizes a completely different type of cinematographic image, seen in only a few, almost exclusively French films, but offering the potential of radically altering the nature of cinema's position in art.

Rodowick warns us that Deleuze, like many French theorists, is often difficult to follow. Even fellow French theorist Jacques Aumont comments in *The Image* (130) that Deleuze's classifications are not always clear, and Rodowick qualifies his respect for Deleuze's theoretical ability against his consistent inability to produce correspondingly convincing film analyses. Nevertheless, Deleuze offers two frameworks which offer considerable potential for the interpretation of films.

The principle division between the "movement-image" and the "time-image" is axed around the presentation of time. The movement-image represents time indirectly, and it does this through depicting movement taking place in space. Almost all feature films work this way, mimicking the spectators' sensorimotor mechanisms. They recognise the action on the screen as being allegorical to their perceptual experience of real actions. Psychological actions such as those occurring in dreams, hallucinations, or flashbacks also fall under the umbrella of the movement-image. Deleuze's philosophical foundation derives principally from Bergson's theory of the three levels of movement. Onto this, he builds a taxonomy of signifying elements using the semiotic approach of Peirce, preferring it over Saussure's language-centered semiology for its capacity to adapt to cinema's largely iconic elements.

The time-image differs in that it represents time directly. Rather than representing movement in space, it represents it in time, and the spectatorial experience is markedly different. To do this, a film must abandon the mimesis of sensorimotor connections; it must even actively work to prevent them being brought into play. Broadly speaking, the time-image does not so much represent action taking place in space, which indirectly infers duration, but represents thought itself, which only takes place in time. Time in this context is no longer shown as being divided into rational intervals. It is freed from artificial constraints such as chronology and sequentiality, where it is a succession of measurable instants dividing into past, present, and future. Deleuze also adds Pasolini's use of the free indirect style, which seeks to disrupt the conventional sound/image relation, and what Rodowick calls a "curious concept" from Kant's Third Critique, the notion of "heautonomous images," meaning that image and sound are distinct and incommensurable yet complementary (145). This means that the spectators will not be seeing cinematographic images which echo their own lived experience, but something radically different, which is closer to their purely conceptual processes.

The film which Deleuze names as first exhibiting the time-image is Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941). Other films which include the time-image are Alain Resnais' *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) and *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (1968); Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1963); and films by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Luc Godard, and Philippe Garrel. These are films which have generated considerable discussion regarding the best approach to their interpretation, and Deleuze's theory potentially offers a solution. The catch is that firstly, the boundary between his two categories of cinematographic images is not clear. Perhaps it is because the movement-image is fully realised, and the time-image is merely emergent. Even those films just cited as examples are not composed entirely of time-images. Secondly, as Rodowick warns, Deleuze never offers a clear definition of the time-image in the whole of the book on it (89). He advises, "The question is how to understand the vicissitudes of the time-image with respect to Bergson's analysis of the fundamental forms of memory."

Rodowick excels in presenting Deleuze for those who are unfamiliar with his work, demonstrating that it is well worth making the effort to wrangle with his erudite ratiocinations. At times I find that Rodowick's text is also difficult to follow, but he has to rearticulate and explain difficult concepts. He succeeds in his stated task of demonstrating the consistency and value of Deleuze's concepts, and *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* should lead to an increased presence of this important French theorist's ideas in cinema critique outside of France.

John Emerson is working on a Ph.D. comparing colonial themes in French and Australian cinemas at the University of Adelaide, Australia.

Latin Looks

Images of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. Media

Edited by Clara E. Rodríguez. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997. $69.00 cloth; $22.00 paper.

This is a useful, if limited, collection of articles on images of Latinos in U.S. audio-visual media. It is limited by the age of some of the articles, which date as far back as 1980; their uneven quality; and, most importantly, by the largely unexamined quality of the central concept, of Latino (or "Chicano" or "Puerto Rican") identity.

Clara E. Rodríguez, Professor of Sociology at Fordham University, has organized the essays into four general categories. The first largely summarizes results of content analysis studies on Latino images on TV and news, principally through a study of 1992–1993 TV programming conducted by S. Robert Lichter and Daniel R. Amundson for the National Council of La Raza. Their study reinforces others that show Latinos are relatively rarely depicted, and when represented, are often shown in a negative light.

The second part collects varied writings on Latinos in mainstream U.S. film. This section generally suffers from a sketchy grasp of Hollywood studio history and an almost complete lack of interest in the once-powerful Mexican film industry and its relations with Hollywood (not to mention the once-grand studios of Argentina and Brazil, whose histories intersected less intimately with U.S. studios). However, of particular interest is Chon Noriega's thoughtful analysis of social problem films featuring Latinos (*The Ring, Giant, My Man and I, Trial*), which he argues have as a central problem finding a place for Latinos on the American cultural landscape. Rodríguez' own collection of photographs of Latino Hollywood stars, including Lupe Vélez, Ricardo Montalban, Anthony Quinn, and Rita Hayworth, also provides food for visual reflection. Other articles are more predictable taxonomies of stereotypes. Alberto Sandoval Sánchez' article interpreting *West Side Story* in terms of his own experience of being "read" through it by Midwesterners has personal appeal, but his readings can be grimly monochrome. Anita's character, for instance, becomes for him a simple booster for assimilation, although her lyrics alone suggest a much more complex and dynamic story of self-hatred and cultural confusion. However, it's fascinating and revealing that he describes himself as having discovered his Puerto Rican-ness through confrontation with Anglos' images of it.

The third section largely addresses independent film by Latinos. Lillian Jiménez' article, while dated, usefully considers the roles of institutions, including Puerto Rican civic organizations, public television, and the civil rights movement. Critic Liz Kotz, in a journalistic overview of Latin-American and Latina film work that mentions several key events of the 1980s and also mentions important institutions such as Women Make Movies, helpfully suggests that film analysts pay attention to creativity in the area of transborder and diasporic culture—a trend that is now well established. Linda Williams' short 1980 article on transcending stereotype continues to be a gem. Looking at *Salt of the Earth* and *Alambrista!*, she lauds them for not fleeing stereotype only to fall into an individualistic trap. She praises them rather for locating people within a social context, so that they can occupy a type rather than simply be stereotypes. Finally, a short, topical summary of the state of Hispanic media has been superseded by the work of América Rodríguez.

In the fourth section, Clara Rodríguez provides media literacy tools for students and teachers, including film lists and reading questions. She ends it with a list of action suggestions. These range from starting an organization to calling the local TV station to encouraging Congress to pass equal employment opportunity legislation. Some suggestions, obviously, are more practical than others.

Reflecting experience teaching a course on Latino imagery in media, this book organizes the essays around an agenda to defend and promote positive Latino images. It does not, however, provide the analytical tools to permit students to ask exactly what then would constitute a positive image, or indeed who constitutes a Latino, and why. Authors in the book often use depiction of African Americans as a yardstick by which to measure the portrayal of Latinos, but, as some of them accurately note, racial evaluation is only one—and an unstable one—of the elements by which this category has been created. They also note the difficulty of, for instance, identifying Chicanas rather than Puerto Ricans on screen. This, however, points to a far more interesting problem: the creation of the general ethnic category of Latino (or, as the book also uses without defining or explaining, Hispanic). In an era in which cultural identity has become recognized and experienced as a process rather than a fact, not just nationally but globally, it is a weak analytical strategy to reify yesterday's abstraction. From that perspective, many of the articles in this book would become useful data for an analysis of a pioneer period in communications research on cultural identity in media.

Patricia Aufderheide is a professor in the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C.

Lynch on Lynch

Edited by Chris Rodley. Boston: Faber & Faber, 1997. $24.95.

Lynch on Lynch is a transcript of a series of new interviews with David Lynch conducted by Chris Rodley, himself a filmmaker. The interviews took place over a period of three years, beginning in 1993 and ending in December 1996. They are not unprecedented since, during the same period, I too was interviewing Lynch extensively, but they are the only such interviews to be printed in transcript (my interviews were ultimately integrated into a critical study). For this reason, *Lynch on Lynch* breaks ground as a source of raw material valuable to both those fascinated by this frequently misperceived filmmaker and those interested in issues concerning cinematic authorship.

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Latin Looks

Images of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. Media

Edited by Clara E. Rodríguez. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997. $69.00 cloth; $22.00 paper.

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familiar composite of hair, mannerisms, and voice is a mask-like caricature and it resonates with the eerie silence the unraised mask promotes. Not that the figure of the masked Lynch is to be despised; it is very much a creation (engineered by the man himself with the perhaps unwitting collaboration of the press), one that challenges the hegemony of words and all that goes with them in ways comparable to Lynch's films. So supplanting that enigmatic self-presentation is not a desiratum, nor will that be the consequence of this book, which creates a complex fusion of the tapdance of the showman (which has been Lynch's only public image) and the unique down-to-earth magus that his intimates know.

Beyond satisfying, in part, curiosity about the man, *Lynch on Lynch* raises questions about, primarily, the role of the director, since his portrayal of his work methods conflicts markedly with the dominant discourses of those dedicated to historicizing film and those who insist that a film is "always already" generated by cultural constructs, and so not in any meaningful way created by an artist. In opening himself to public scrutiny in these pages, Lynch shows himself to be in irrevocable conflict with the demotion of the director to a function of cultural values, although he certainly does not seek to reinstate the auteur as he/she is commonly understood: theoretician and maker of the personal statement. On the contrary. In these pages, Lynch permits us to plumb the depths of his understanding of the film director as a fisher of the subconscious. He emerges as astonishingly innocent of the pervasive influences of cultural studies as he turns instead to what is on his mind, productively blurring the boundaries between artist and commercial filmmaker by describing his cinematic process in terms which not only peacefully coexist with the concept of the solitary creator, but also extend it into an area with which it is very rarely associated. Any collective belief in the solitary artist presupposes a mysterious process which commences with a joyous fascination that over a period of time metamorphoses into a work of art, for reasons which ultimately escape both the artist and the public, but such a process strikes us collectively as impossible within the collaborative, industrial sphere of mass market, narrative film.

However, in talking with Rodley, Lynch unself-consciously challenges old notions about what can take place within the business sector, the undoubted location of commercial film. If his claims bear no relationship whatsoever to those fashioned currently by sociologically inclined cultural studies critics, they do wind up intersecting with other cutting-edge theories, those of neuroscience, exemplified in Antonio R. Damasio's *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (G. Putnam & Sons, 1994). This provocative work, and those like it, challenges the prevailing ideals of objectivity that underlie a current tendency in Film Studies to ridicule and/or trivialize Lynch's tenacious championing of the passion of the process, both in dealing with the narrative and in dealing with the tone and texture of his movies. Damasio is not just another skeptic about true belief in objectivity, but part of a new and fiercer challenge, as he charts in meticulous detail the neurological process that accompanies reasoning, concluding thereby that fully formed rational thought *cannot take place,* is physiologically impossible, unless it emerges out of a formative stage of imaging remarkably similar to the one Lynch describes in many places in Rodley's book. His charting of the pathways of firing neurons threatens to release from marginality the kind of statements made by Einstein, as quoted by Damasio, who (without charts) also insisted on the fusion between intellectual coherence and emotional image production: "The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be 'voluntarily' reproduced and combined" (107). Within this framework, the belief that science and art issue from a ratiocination that successfully subordinates the disruptive energies of emotion is a debilitating fiction, and Lynch is not an eccentric but a creator more in touch with reality than the majority who are befuddled by overstated claims for objectivity.

In the interviews, Lynch's statements are more modest. His claims for the emotion and imagery (both aural and visual) that generate his films arise from concrete discussions of particular aspects of his work and are restricted to descriptions of *his* process. As an art student, Lynch was accustomed to a tacit agreement among his compatriots that questions presupposing a flatly rational basis for artistic choice were inexcusable. As he has said to me, his private response to such questions has historically been, "How dare they?" Publically, Lynch has chosen inscrutability over rudeness. Now, in Rodley's book, Lynch opts for openness in an act of faith that within the prevailing discourse takes on a heroic dimension.

Part of the charm of Lynch's introspection is his unguarded declaration of love for his bursts of visual revelation. Speaking of a scene that didn't make the final cut of *Eraserhead,* Lynch says, "Yeah. Henry sees into a room [in a next-door apartment] and there's two women tied to a bed, and a man with an electric box. It was a beautiful thing" (84). The other beguiling aspect of Lynch's discussion of his work method is his unexpected capacity to resist. In a turnaround that demonstrates how compatible judgement and fascination are for Lynch, he says of the same image, "The reason I took that out is that it was too disturbing to the film. I didn't want anyone even to think about what's next door [to Henry's apartment]. It just clouded and disturbed it [the film]." This dialogue, to which Lynch returns repeatedly throughout the interviews, builds a breathing image of Lynch at work. Similarly, when Lynch recounts production histories about scenes we *have* seen, he adds to the magic of the onscreen image the wonder and magic of the balance between openness and control that begot it.

As he responds to his interlocutor, Lynch also pays tribute to those within the industry who support his modus operandi. The most striking of these is Mel Brooks, in his capacity as producer of *The Elephant Man.* Although it has long been evident that Brooks has a serious side, he has created the persona of a trickster who negotiates the perilous Hollywood undertow by such self-mocking ploys as signing

his correspondence "Your obedient Jew." As Lynch presents him, Brooks is a generous, magisterial force, capable of head-on defiance of business as usual; indeed, Lynch credits Brooks with having saved the dreamlike opening and closing shots of *The Elephant Man,* out of respect and sensibility rather than rationale.

The strength of *Lynch on Lynch* is that it so richly features a Lynch who is introspective, grounded, and fiercely protective of his subconscious creative process, and a Hollywood within which it can work (albeit not without some doing). That is also its weakness, for it permits the reader little access to the Lynch who is not in the throes of creation, the man who ponders the meaning and structure of existence. There are intimations—in Lynch's brief revelations about his political orientation and about his attitudes toward gender stereotypes—that will surprise many. But though his world view is obliquely available in his work, Lynch is not ready to reveal it directly. In my discussions with him about it, he often indicated that he did not wish to be quoted. The same situation may have obtained with Rodley. There is more to come. For now, *Lynch on Lynch* provides us with a better articulated picture of the filmmaker than we have had. For some, the filmmaker's words will re-open the debate about how to proceed when the artist's inner sense of what he does clashes with the "objective" critic's theoretical scheme of things.

Martha P. Nochimson, who teaches at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY, and is the author of *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood,* is currently working on a book about the use of couples in the Hollywood-influenced media.

Making Images Move

By Jan-Christopher Horak. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. $34.95.

In histories of cinema, photography is often figured as a mere technological stepping stone, a necessary but primitive moment in the inexorable progression toward increasingly realistic forms of representation. According to this narrative, the prodigious time-motion experiments of Muybridge and Marey seem quaintly tragic in their failure to achieve an illusion of movement which is today taken for granted. But, as some of the earliest commentators on cinema noted, it was photography, not film, which provided rare glimpses into worlds that are invisible to the naked eye. Movies, as Warhol reminded us, do little more than slavishly recreate the world as we see it, replete with all its artifice and tedium. While some photographers have claimed to realize greater flexibility in the transition from still to moving images, others have sustained a complex and productive engagement with the two. Unfortunately, the creative interrelationship of film and photography has been largely neglected by critics of both media. With a detailed examination of eight photographer/filmmakers, Jan-Christopher Horak's new book, *Making Images Move,* offers an intelligent and much-needed contribution to this gap in contemporary scholarship.

Horak's selection of artists to exemplify the entangled relationship of film and photography is necessarily idiosyncratic. Rather than attempting an overview or comprehensive history, Horak opts for a close, circumscribed reading of the work of a few individuals who have traversed the two media throughout their careers. The artists selected, Chris Marker, Helmar Lerski, Paul Strand, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Helen Levitt, Robert Frank, Danny Lyon, and Ed van der Elsken, range from the renowned to the obscure, making the book at once invitingly familiar and provocatively broadening. The subjects of *Making Images Move* are defined as:

> . . . photographers who ventured into the field of cinema without relinquishing their interest in photography. Unlike many . . . who only trained as photographers before moving more profitably into the field of moving pictures, these photographer/filmmakers have traveled across the borders of both media, learning from each mode of expression, wholly allegiant to neither. (7)

Horak's agenda varies from artist to artist. With Chris Marker alone he looks for evidence of direct amalgamation of the two media—e.g., the "photographic nature" of films like *La Jetée* (1963) or *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (1966) and the overtly cinematic influences of his photographic books, which are largely unknown (and as yet unpublished) outside of Europe. In most other cases, such connections are woven into a reading which revolves around a theme like politics (Strand, Lerski, Lyon) or subjectivity (Frank, Levitt, van der Elsken). Horak's discussion of less prominent artists such as Lerski and van der Elsken is accessible and informative, while his readings of Strand and Moholy-Nagy offer a fresh angle on lesser-known aspects of their well-documented careers. In all cases, discussions of the individual artists are best understood in relation to this book's narrowly defined project and the gap it is trying to fill, rather than as a comprehensive reading of a complete body of work.

In addition to the chapter on Marker, of particular interest are the treatments of Robert Frank and Helen Levitt. Although the title of the chapter on Frank ("Daddy Searching for the Truth") seems to promise a simple narrative reading of Frank's many forays into autobiography, Horak in fact demonstrates a rare sensitivity and insight into these personal documents and the often tragic lives they reveal. The chapter on Helen Levitt (the only woman represented in the book) performs an important and unprecedented archaeology of a body of film work which the artist herself has all but disavowed. However, its reading of masked children in terms of Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque feels somewhat forced and overly literal, while Horak's further observation about the filmmaker discovering her subjectivity through artistic production is among the author's least inspired. Nonetheless, this chapter offers a convincing argument that, in spite of her resistance, Levitt's film work should not be lost to history.

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tracing themes which are consistent within both their film and photographic work. This links up neatly with Horak's (following from P. Adams Sitney's) view of the American film avant-garde as a fundamentally Romantic movement driven by the expression of unique vision and subjectivities. In most cases, his elaboration of these themes goes beyond merely tracking similarities or arguing for the importance and appreciation of each photographer/filmmaker's *other* oeuvre. Each chapter stands on its own, developing a clearly defined reading of some aspect of one individual's work without attempting any substantive historical or thematic links between them. The result is a less cohesive overall work, which excels in its specificity and detail but frustrates the desire for a more global theorization of the nature of the relationship between photography and film.

The volume concludes with an extremely useful filmography of photographers who have made films and an extensive bibliography, pointing the way for additional work on this subject. Far from an oversight, Horak's refusal to generalize about the interrelationship between photography and film is reinforced by the extremely diverse examples he has chosen. *Making Images Move* does not pretend to offer the last word on this subject, but it is particularly successful in demonstrating the need for additional scholarship and the rewards of doing so. Together with his excellent anthology, *Lovers of Cinema* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), this book distinguishes Jan-Christopher Horak as one of the most original and creative contemporary scholars of avant-garde cinema.

Steve Anderson is a filmmaker and doctoral candidate in Film, Literature and Culture at the University of Southern California who writes about historiography, TV, and the avant-garde.

The New American Cinema

Edited by Jon Lewis. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998. $59.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

In his introduction to this anthology, Jon Lewis notes that he has taught a course on the "new American cinema" for the last 15 years, although increasingly unsure to what period the term actually refers. Would this be the "personal," auteur-influenced cinema of the movie brats that appeared during the late 1960s and early 1970s, or the thoroughly corporate product that emerged during the early 1980s as multinationals supplanted moguls and the auteur became a marketable label? No doubt Lewis has to clarify the course description in a different way for his students: contemporary undergraduates might wonder what old films like *Thelma and Louise* or *Brazil* (although never, of course, *Pulp Fiction*) are doing on the syllabus, and the inclusion of *The Conversation* or *A Woman Under the Influence* (although never, of course, *Taxi Driver*) effectively converts the course into prehistory.

Lewis takes the long view, offering a set of 13 essays that examine a "number of new American cinemas" arising in the last 30 years. He specifically solicited these articles to comprise a panoramic, interdisciplinary perspective across the book, although as published the pieces are grouped into three smaller sections according to a shared methodological approach. "Movies and Money" looks at the industrial contexts of contemporary film production, marketing, and distribution; "Cinema and Culture" examines movies in their social and political dimension; and "Independents and Independence" deals with those ostensibly marginalized films and filmmakers. The essays vary in quality; while most are well written and develop a thesis supported by research, several are closer to surveys or chronologies that really do not offer controvertible conclusions.

Compare, for example, in the "Money and Movies" section (which is probably the best in the book), David Cook's contribution on "Auteur Cinema and the 'Film Generation' in 1970s Hollywood" with Timothy Corrigan's "Auteurs and the New Hollywood." Cook's piece comes to the nonstartling conclusion that one must always account for the industrial contexts within which innovative, auteurist films like *Taxi Driver* and *The Godfather* are produced, whereas in the next essay Corrigan pushes the implications of such a perspective in a compelling way by focusing on the contradictions of "personal expression" within the commodity context. Recalling Brecht's work on the commerce function of authorship, Corrigan demonstrates how (as one example) Francis Ford Coppola has constructed a directorial self in media interviews that is simultaneously "defined and threatened" by the technological spectacle and profit imperatives of contemporary Hollywood. Justin Wyatt's piece "From Roadshowing to Saturation Release" is another strong essay, convincingly showing how the studios co-opted novel marketing and distribution strategies from independents in art, adult, and family cinemas during the 1960s and 1970s to exploit the widest markets needed for the nascent blockbuster phenomenon. But while Lewis's own "Money Matters: Hollywood in the Corporate Era" begins in a quite promising way with an analysis of how the studios learned the value of collusion in the wake of the Paramount decision and the blacklist, the discussion soon devolves into an overdetailed narrative account of the 1980s financial maneuvers and mergers that tends to lose sight of the original thesis—how the oligopolistic situation of earlier days has been recreated and intensified. Further, although Lewis does conclude his essay by mentioning the "political ramifications" of such media empires with conservative ownership, he does not fully explore this most important aspect of collusion.

The second section, "Cinema and Culture," contains some thoughtful textual analyses of genres popular during the 1980s and onward, particularly Sabrina Barton's essay on the "woman's psychothriller," in which she employs the active female investigator/duplicitous male villain trope seen in films like *Silence of the Lambs* to question Judith Butler's construction of gender performativity as progressive. Tania Modleski's piece on the war film, "A Rose Is a Rose? Real Women and a Lost War," explores whether putatively antiwar films such as *Platoon* can ever fully challenge the patriarchal culture that produces them. In contrast, she examines Nancy Savoca's *Dogfight,* which attempts to undermine "one

tracing themes which are consistent within both their film and photographic work. This links up neatly with Horak's (following from P. Adams Sitney's) view of the American film avant-garde as a fundamentally Romantic movement driven by the expression of unique vision and subjectivities. In most cases, his elaboration of these themes goes beyond merely tracking similarities or arguing for the importance and appreciation of each photographer/filmmaker's *other* oeuvre. Each chapter stands on its own, developing a clearly defined reading of some aspect of one individual's work without attempting any substantive historical or thematic links between them. The result is a less cohesive overall work, which excels in its specificity and detail but frustrates the desire for a more global theorization of the nature of the relationship between photography and film.

The volume concludes with an extremely useful filmography of photographers who have made films and an extensive bibliography, pointing the way for additional work on this subject. Far from an oversight, Horak's refusal to generalize about the interrelationship between photography and film is reinforced by the extremely diverse examples he has chosen. *Making Images Move* does not pretend to offer the last word on this subject, but it is particularly successful in demonstrating the need for additional scholarship and the rewards of doing so. Together with his excellent anthology, *Lovers of Cinema* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), this book distinguishes Jan-Christopher Horak as one of the most original and creative contemporary scholars of avant-garde cinema.

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The New American Cinema

Edited by Jon Lewis. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998. $59.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

In his introduction to this anthology, Jon Lewis notes that he has taught a course on the "new American cinema" for the last 15 years, although increasingly unsure to what period the term actually refers. Would this be the "personal," auteur-influenced cinema of the movie brats that appeared during the late 1960s and early 1970s, or the thoroughly corporate product that emerged during the early 1980s as multinationals supplanted moguls and the auteur became a marketable label? No doubt Lewis has to clarify the course description in a different way for his students: contemporary undergraduates might wonder what old films like *Thelma and Louise* or *Brazil* (although never, of course, *Pulp Fiction*) are doing on the syllabus, and the inclusion of *The Conversation* or *A Woman Under the Influence* (although never, of course, *Taxi Driver*) effectively converts the course into prehistory.

Lewis takes the long view, offering a set of 13 essays that examine a "number of new American cinemas" arising in the last 30 years. He specifically solicited these articles to comprise a panoramic, interdisciplinary perspective across the book, although as published the pieces are grouped into three smaller sections according to a shared methodological approach. "Movies and Money" looks at the industrial contexts of contemporary film production, marketing, and distribution; "Cinema and Culture" examines movies in their social and political dimension; and "Independents and Independence" deals with those ostensibly marginalized films and filmmakers. The essays vary in quality; while most are well written and develop a thesis supported by research, several are closer to surveys or chronologies that really do not offer controvertible conclusions.

Compare, for example, in the "Money and Movies" section (which is probably the best in the book), David Cook's contribution on "Auteur Cinema and the 'Film Generation' in 1970s Hollywood" with Timothy Corrigan's "Auteurs and the New Hollywood." Cook's piece comes to the nonstartling conclusion that one must always account for the industrial contexts within which innovative, auteurist films like *Taxi Driver* and *The Godfather* are produced, whereas in the next essay Corrigan pushes the implications of such a perspective in a compelling way by focusing on the contradictions of "personal expression" within the commodity context. Recalling Brecht's work on the commerce function of authorship, Corrigan demonstrates how (as one example) Francis Ford Coppola has constructed a directorial self in media interviews that is simultaneously "defined and threatened" by the technological spectacle and profit imperatives of contemporary Hollywood. Justin Wyatt's piece "From Roadshowing to Saturation Release" is another strong essay, convincingly showing how the studios co-opted novel marketing and distribution strategies from independents in art, adult, and family cinemas during the 1960s and 1970s to exploit the widest markets needed for the nascent blockbuster phenomenon. But while Lewis's own "Money Matters: Hollywood in the Corporate Era" begins in a quite promising way with an analysis of how the studios learned the value of collusion in the wake of the Paramount decision and the blacklist, the discussion soon devolves into an overdetailed narrative account of the 1980s financial maneuvers and mergers that tends to lose sight of the original thesis—how the oligopolistic situation of earlier days has been recreated and intensified. Further, although Lewis does conclude his essay by mentioning the "political ramifications" of such media empires with conservative ownership, he does not fully explore this most important aspect of collusion.

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of the most basic assumptions of Hollywood war films in regard to women and male bonding, suggesting *not* that men must give up ties to women and families in order to survive, but that the unthinking loyalty to the all-male group . . . an ideal promoted by military life and by much of our civilian culture as well, is what threatens their survival" (137).

The other three articles in this section investigate to a somewhat greater extent the relationship between the specific social and cultural contexts and the aesthetic and narrative features of the films examined, with varying degrees of success. In "Conspiracy Theory and Political Murder in America: Oliver Stone's *JFK* and the Facts of the Matter," Christopher Sharrett confronts the media's outraged response to the film. He is less interested in defending *JFK* as "authentic"; rather, he sees it as the epicenter of a broader cultural event, a potentially politically disruptive intervention within public discourse that threatened to expose the antidemocratic foundations of state power in America, both in 1963 and 1991. Fred Pfeil's "From Pillar to Postmodern: Race, Class, and Gender in the Male Rampage Film" offers essentially a structural analysis of action films like the *Lethal Weapon* and *Die Hard* series that attempts to connect changes in representation of "rugged white male individualism" to shifts from a Fordist to post-Fordist economic structure. Relying on a problematic reflectionist paradigm, these films are thus reduced to "national allegory." Finally, Scott Bukatman's "Zooming Out: The End of Offscreen Space" offers a rather diffuse and speculative discussion about the historical trajectory of "immersive" spectacle in the cinema (from Hale's Tours to IMAX), using end-of-century science fictions as the culmination of this impulse.

The last section, "Independents and Independence," is not as strong as the those preceding it. There are two auteurist analyses, Ivone Margulies on John Cassavetes and Catherine Russell on Peggy Ahwesh, Su Friedrich, and Leslie Thornton. Cassavetes' work behind the camera has yet to be sufficiently historicized within 1960s and 1970s film culture, and Margulies' essay does not really contribute to this cause. Russell's article, which explores the deconstructive poetics of three filmmakers' experimental ethnographies, is best viewed as an extended companion piece to the films, which unfortunately are likely little known outside the urban art world and museum circuit. Chuck Kleinhans' contribution, "Independent Features: Hopes and Dreams," provides a fine introduction for an undergraduate readership to the conditions and realities of independent filmmaking in the 1990s. The essay would be particularly productive if juxtaposed to Ed Guerrero's "A Circus of Dreams and Lies: The Black Film Wave at Middle Age" in terms of how they broach the debate over the role and function of an independent cinema. For Guerrero, "it all comes back to the resistance practices and oppositional currents of black filmmakers, critics, and the potential for an evolving social consciousness of the audience" (350). For Kleinhans, "independence alone does not confer political, social, or aesthetic value" (322), and he agrees with critic Michelle Wallace that, in regard to a burgeoning African-American cinematic tradition, we must address "'the nagging question as to whether such representations would somehow make black people's lives better overall'" (323).

Ultimately the inclusion of surveys in *The New American Cinema* is less an issue if some of the readings are intended for pedagogical purposes, particularly a clientele increasingly unwilling to read book-length assignments. But the omission of several methodologies now commonplace or resurgent in film scholarship—most notably reception studies, stylistic analysis, and cognitivism—detract from the value of such a collection, particularly one that proclaims scope and diversity of approach as its goal. Also, given the editor's assertion of the dominance of the corporate financial context upon all features of the new American cinemas, the inclusion of work on the impact of television and other media on the aesthetics, production, and circulation of the contemporary cinematic product would have further contributed to the panoramic showcase he sought.

Heidi Kenaga is completing a dissertation on silent-era Westerns at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was recently Visiting Instructor of Film Studies at Clemson University.

On the History of Film Style

By David Bordwell. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998. $60.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.

A major casualty of the transformation of Film Studies that took place in the late 1960s and 1970s was the field of film aesthetics, which had, for better or worse, become inextricably bound up with auteurism. To study film style was to study the individual style of directors. Auteurism's indebtedness to traditional aesthetics—with its interest in "beauty" and "value" (is it good or bad?)—made it an easy target. Traditional aesthetics not only asked the wrong questions, but it wasn't very scientific either. As a result of an aggressive critique of the Romantic assumptions informing auteurism, a new generation of scholars looked at stylistic practices previously understood as unique expressions of specific individuals and institutions, or specific times and places, and saw nothing but signifying systems, or better yet, a single signifying system operating on behalf of the dominant ideological apparatus. In other words, the study of style was suddenly no longer bound up with aesthetics but rather with ideology. No longer a thing of beauty or value in itself, style became a means through which patriarchal ideology (re)produced its subjects. The study of style as such quickly fell into disrepute.

Yes, but not quite. As the study of the cinema became more systematic, so did the study of film style—under the influence of the notion of "poetics" developed by Russian Formalism. Critics such as David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Edward Branigan, and others sought to systematize the study of film style, to identify the laws which governed it. Questions of value disappeared and along with them concerns for what Andrew Sarris called "interior meaning" or, somewhat more mystically, the "*élan* of the soul." Bordwell

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et al. explored the notion of "group style," of a "background set" of stylistic practices that informed the choices available for filmmakers as they sought the best solution to solve specific problems related to the craft of narration.

At the same time, Barry Salt was at work on his monumental history of style, *Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis* (1983). For Salt, the development of film style was driven, in large part, by technological change. If Bordwell's interest in style was "scientific" in a theoretical sense (i.e., formalist), Salt's was scientific in a more literal sense: it was grounded in the empirical observation of thousands of films and in the careful reading of scientific and trade journals.

Although the study of film style survived the onslaught of what Bordwell has dubbed "Grand Theory" or "Slab Theory" (Saussure, Lacan, Althusser, Barthes), it has done so in a way that is detached from concern for value or meaning (pace Sarris and students of Sarris, such as William Paul and others, who continue to study film style in terms of aesthetics). Indeed, for me, the most frustrating aspect of Bordwell's continuing project is its refusal of meaning. Bordwell refuses to read style in terms of theme, to *interpret* mise-en-scène, editing, or sound. (Thus *Rear Window* is not "about" desire, a crisis in postwar gender relations, or emotional paralysis but about the activity of the viewer who, like the film's hero, implements various hypotheses, procedural schemata, and problem-solving strategies in an attempt to make sense of the narrative.)

In short, the study of film style has survived—in Bordwell, at least—in the form of cognitive poetics. This background will hopefully clarify the value and intent (dare I say "meaning") of Bordwell's latest book, *On the History of Film Style*. As a careful reading of the title indicates, this is not a history of film style; it is about the writing of histories of film style. In this respect, it serves as a companion piece to Bordwell's earlier effort for Harvard, *Making Meaning* (1989).

In the most recent book, Bordwell identifies various models used in the writing of histories of film style. There is the "Standard Version," epitomized in Maurice Bardèche's and Robert Brasillach's *Histoire du cinéma* (1935). This version told the "Basic Story," which took the form of a rise and fall—the roles of Porter and Griffith in the development of editing and the evolution of film narrative, "the flowering of the silent film" in the 1920s, and the decline of film art in response to the coming of sound. Bordwell's history of this version includes a well-researched account of the roles played by various institutions, ranging from trade magazines and ciné-clubs to the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art, in the creation of a film canon.

One response to the Standard Version was that of André Bazin, who refigured the scenario of decline, introduced by the advent of the talkies, into linear progress. Bordwell calls this version the "Dialectical Program" in an attempt to identify it with Bazin's dialectical history of film style. Bordwell's earlier use of (the fascist) Bardèche and Brasillach places the history of film style in a French context; here (the leftist) Bazin can be seen as a reaction against this earlier model.

Bordwell's use of Noël Burch, an American expatriate living in France who wrote much of his work on film style in French as a response to Bazin, further grounds interest in stylistic histories of the cinema in French thought. Given the fascination of the first generation of *Cahiers du cinéma* critics with things stylistic (as opposed to the more thematic auteurism of the *Movie* group in England), Bordwell's "French line" is quite appropriate. The history of style in the cinema is a history written in French.

The dialectical nature of Bazin's thought emerges most clearly in his discussion of the relation of deep focus to earlier forms of editing. Since Bordwell's own contribution to stylistic history in this volume concerns deep focus and the history of staging in depth, his discussion of Bazin serves to place him within a discursive tradition identified with that critic (though Bordwell's argument is also, and equally, a reaction to Burch).

Bazin's "Basic Story" provides an evolutionary account of the development of film style. The art of the cinema does not die with the coming of sound. Since stylistic evolution takes place along two adjacent strands of development—those who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality—one strand of silent aesthetics (Flaherty, Stroheim, Murnau) continues into the present (Renoir, Welles, Wyler, Rossellini). But, in his assertion that the evolution of film style can be charted in terms of a Darwinian development toward Total Cinema, Bazin indulges in a fatal Hegelian error that infects all versions (except Bordwell's).

The Hegelian influence can be seen in the Standard Version's "Hegelianism without metaphysics," in Bazin's notion of the cinema's "self-realization" or laying-bare its essence, and in Burch's notion of a "sublation that transcends illusionism and its alternatives by synthesizing them at a new level." What's wrong with Hegel, for Bordwell, is his notion of an original spirit or essence that is in the process of realization. Hegel is a form of Grand Theory, of a master narrative that supposedly guides the development of film style.

It is here that Bordwell's book on style emerges as a companion to his recent editorial collaborative effort with Noël Carroll, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Wisconsin, 1996). In the master narratives proposed in the Standard Version, Bazin's Version, and Burch's Version, history falls victim to narrative. The attempt to cohere the whole history of the cinema into a single version, into a Hegelian working-out/working-through of phenomena toward some ultimate goal, betrays the complexity of the subject at hand. In the wake of the Grand Theory of the 1970s, film academics sought to theorize history and historicize theory. The result, as Bordwell sees it, was a "top-down commentary on film history" by "history-of-vision" theorohistorians who sought to read the history of film style in terms of what Walter Benjamin referred to as a culture's "mode of perception." For history-of-vision scholars, film style, at any point in time, reflects a culture's way of seeing. Thus early cinema conveys the shocks of modernity. Bordwell views this as "a baggy explanation" because it fails to discriminate among "manifold differences in editing technique" of films of this period.

But we have gotten ahead of ourselves in the history of models for the writing of the evolution of film style. In response to Bazin, there is Noël Burch, who re-read dominant stylistic practices from the vantage point of the modernist experimentation of the avant-garde. In comparison with Bazin, who follows a single strand of stylistic development, Burch is identified with an "oppositional" research program. Burch looks at the history of film style in terms of oppositional responses to the dominant style, to what he calls the Institutional Mode of Representation. Burch's interest in early cinema (the Primitive Mode of Representation), the Soviet Response to the IMR, and Japanese cinema of the 1930s results in a dialectical history of film style in which different, modernist, and/or avant-garde stylistics emerge against a background of zero-degree stylistics associated with Hollywood and commercial cinema.

In the wake of Burch (who played a crucial role in the development of subsequent research programs by Tom Gunning and others) came the revisionist historians of the 1980s, who eschewed the synoptic histories of the past in favor of what Bordwell calls "piecemeal" histories, histories of finite periods or movements that do not attempt to construct a master narrative.

In *Post-Theory,* Noël Carroll calls for "piecemeal theory" in response to Grand Theory. By this he means that theorists should frame their questions more narrowly, to explore theoretical issues on a more manageable scale, to be more pragmatic. Bordwell here applies "piecemeal theory" to historiography. We need to see the history of film style in terms of pragmatic solutions to specific problems confronting individual filmmakers. Bordwell's cognitivism makes him the soulmate of every Hollywood filmmaker I've ever met. "All this theory stuff is a crock. We do what we do in an attempt to solve specific problems. You academics just don't understand how films get made." They are, of course, right; but if we concede that, we're out of a job. Besides, there's got to be more to the history of style than on-the-job demands. Bordwell uses Truffaut's semi-autobiographical character Ferrand, the director in *Day for Night,* to argue his thesis: A director is "someone who's constantly asked questions about everything" and who must come up with answers. But Truffaut's and Ferrand's answers are informed by a comprehensive knowledge of the history of film style (presumably as written by Bazin). Even piecemeal history is informed by the scenarios of Grand History.

Bordwell's own contribution to the history of film style consists of a 100-page survey of "staging in depth." Not exactly piecemeal, it covers a fairly extensive period, roughly 1896-1994. The narrowness of its focus (no pun intended) is not necessarily advantageous. At the outset of the book, Bordwell apologizes for not dealing with sound (a disclaimer no doubt designed to disarm potential critics). This, however, is a harbinger of problems to come. It is impossible to write a history of style without dealing with the relationship of mise-en-scène to editing and to sound. In isolating staging in depth as a topic, Bordwell cuts that topic off from other stylistic features. Staging in depth must be studied in terms of other aspects of film style. Though Bordwell discusses Feuillade's staging in depth in terms of directing the spectator's attention from foreground to background and back again, this mise-en-scène needs to be studied in terms of editing options available to Feuillade at the time. Style is contextual: A specific shot derives its meaning from its relation to other shots in that film. Scenes staged in depth cannot be adequately understood unless placed in context. Welles' deep-focus shots in *Citizen Kane* can only be appreciated in the context of the montages and decoupages which surround them.

Do not mistake me. This is a very good book. Anyone seriously interested in Film Studies should read it. It will undoubtedly be attacked by those attacked within it (thankfully, I am not a target). It raises very important questions that need to be addressed by the next generation of film scholars. And it provides an extremely intelligent and well-researched account of the field of study (the history of film style) to date. But the fact that its argument is driven by contemporary debates within Film Studies tends to qualify that argument. Hopefully, this book will prompt a resurgence of interest in the history of film style and a return to questions of film aesthetics.

John Belton teaches English and Film at Rutgers University.

Passionate Detachments

An Introduction to Feminist Film Theory

By Sue Thornham. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. $59.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In *Passionate Detachments,* Sue Thornham offers a concise, accessible, intelligent, and lucid introduction to the writing of feminist film scholars from the 1970s through the 1990s and, in particular, an extremely useful synthesis of the influences of French film theory and psychoanalysis on the development of feminist film criticism within the academy. The volume also charts the significant challenges to this approach posed by British Cultural Studies, "fantasy" theory, lesbian studies, African-American feminist studies, postcolonial theory, and postmodern theory. Organized more or less in chronological order, the volume also functions as an intellectual history of the evolution of film studies from a feminist perspective.

This isn't feminist film theory made easy, by any means, although on the whole, it is a book for the already converted. No doubt, as in most cases with works of this type, we will wish that certain favorites had been included, or perhaps simply given more attention. It is easy enough to debate the touchstones of a given field, which ultimately may depend on personal intellectual biography. However, it is far more difficult to construct, as Sue Thornham has done here, a coherent account of a field over a 25-year period, to be discussed, reviewed, and contested as an object of instruction. For this she must be applauded. In an area, unlike most, in which scholars speak "passionately" about their subject (as Thornham's title aptly underlines), this volume constitutes an act of bravery. Thornham has done a great service to the field.

But we have gotten ahead of ourselves in the history of models for the writing of the evolution of film style. In response to Bazin, there is Noël Burch, who re-read dominant stylistic practices from the vantage point of the modernist experimentation of the avant-garde. In comparison with Bazin, who follows a single strand of stylistic development, Burch is identified with an "oppositional" research program. Burch looks at the history of film style in terms of oppositional responses to the dominant style, to what he calls the Institutional Mode of Representation. Burch's interest in early cinema (the Primitive Mode of Representation), the Soviet Response to the IMR, and Japanese cinema of the 1930s results in a dialectical history of film style in which different, modernist, and/or avant-garde stylistics emerge against a background of zero-degree stylistics associated with Hollywood and commercial cinema.

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By Sue Thornham. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. $59.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In *Passionate Detachments,* Sue Thornham offers a concise, accessible, intelligent, and lucid introduction to the writing of feminist film scholars from the 1970s through the 1990s and, in particular, an extremely useful synthesis of the influences of French film theory and psychoanalysis on the development of feminist film criticism within the academy. The volume also charts the significant challenges to this approach posed by British Cultural Studies, "fantasy" theory, lesbian studies, African-American feminist studies, postcolonial theory, and postmodern theory. Organized more or less in chronological order, the volume also functions as an intellectual history of the evolution of film studies from a feminist perspective.

This isn't feminist film theory made easy, by any means, although on the whole, it is a book for the already converted. No doubt, as in most cases with works of this type, we will wish that certain favorites had been included, or perhaps simply given more attention. It is easy enough to debate the touchstones of a given field, which ultimately may depend on personal intellectual biography. However, it is far more difficult to construct, as Sue Thornham has done here, a coherent account of a field over a 25-year period, to be discussed, reviewed, and contested as an object of instruction. For this she must be applauded. In an area, unlike most, in which scholars speak "passionately" about their subject (as Thornham's title aptly underlines), this volume constitutes an act of bravery. Thornham has done a great service to the field.

The book begins with a discussion of Second Wave feminism's initial attempts to reveal and describe "the sexist content of cinematic narrative" (xiii). Chapter 2, "Structures of Fascination: Ideology, Representation and the Unconscious," focuses on a body of work that characterizes British feminist writing on film, which was heavily influenced by developments in French thought during the 1960s. Scholars such as Claire Johnston, Laura Mulvey (grande dame of feminist film theory), and the members of the *Camera Obscura* collective in the United States dismissed, albeit regretfully, the idea that sexism could be simply eradicated. Sexism as such was intrinsic to the cultural mechanisms that had produced film as an aesthetic object and a social institution.

Thornham then details the first major challenge to French-influenced film theory, centered around the issue of spectatorship. If indeed cinema was nothing more or less than the reproduction of patriarchal modes of representation, how then did women find pleasure as moviegoers? In this chapter, Thornham discusses how this question proved to be perhaps the issue that defined the field of feminist film theory as an area of scholarly inquiry still vital today. She delineates two responses: an audience-oriented approach, and an approach that further complicated the initial tenets of femininity as posited by psychoanalysis (66).

Influenced by British Cultural Studies, many film scholars, such as Charlotte Brundson and, later, Jackie Stacey, emphasized resistant audiences who created meaning in response to their own position as well as to the text. Thornham describes this approach in Chapter 4, "Negotiating the Text: Spectator Positions and Audience Readings." These active spectators were not the docile subjects of patriarchy, but used the materials furnished by patriarchy to forge narratives that expressed a feminine sensibility and feminine needs. Scholarship that arises out of this perspective relies heavily on ethnographic research and continues to be an extremely influential model within the field of feminist film studies.

Thornham then investigates what she describes as "fantasy theory" (xv), which draws upon psychoanalytic theory but emphasizes pre-Oedipal (rather than Oedipal) structures that center on the figure of the mother. This emphasis on the mother assumes the construction of a subject for whom gender is not a fixed position, but rather a set of fluid categories. This approach results in a more complicated definition of femininity and its relations to power, subjectivity, and language than that suggested by the work of feminists in the 1970s. Many of these scholars based their notion of subjectivity on the work of French poststructuralist philosopher Louis Althusser. As a result, Oedipus, patriarchy, and capital were often conflated, presupposing a model in which culture functioned as the monolithic and totalitarian arm of the state. However, this re-vision of psychoanalysis, which contested such a facile conflation, leads to yet another critical question for feminist film theory: To what extent can we say that there is a "feminine subject"? And if there is no intrinsically feminine subject, what then is the task of feminist theory in general, and feminist film theory in particular?

In the two subsequent chapters, "Rereading Differences(s) 1: Conceiving Lesbian Desire" and "Rereading Difference(s) 2: Race, Representation and Feminist Theory," the answer to the above is hardly self-evident. Thornham describes how feminist film theory was, quite rightly, taken to task for defining "femininity" as a homogeneous position. This assumption created a de facto erasure of both the lesbian and the woman of color, who occupied specific positions distinct from that of the heterosexual, white, middle-class feminist. To an extent, those feminists who turned to ethnographic research sought to respond to the same theoretical impasse articulated within a different terrain. However, the issues raised in these two chapters underline the need to understand the specificity of marginalized positions in relation to both a dominant position and also in relation to other marginalized positions. To define this area of inquiry, Thornham points to the work of queer theorists. Scholars such as Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz called for and worked toward a theoretical model that posits lesbian desire as a central voice, a given subjectivity. Thornham draws a parallel between these theorists and writers such as Patricia Ticento Clough and Lola Young, who wish to delineate the specificity of a subject position that might defined as black or as postcolonial. Crucial to this perspective is the writing of scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, "whose work in the 1980s developed what she terms a black women's or Afrocentric epistemology" (140).

In her final chapter, "Postmodern Skepticisms," Thornham offers a review of those feminists who have indeed moved to a point at which they are willing to relinquish the feminine as a useful category. Similarly, the category of film itself has become the subject of debate: "The integrated technologies of a 'world system of . . . communication' make it difficult then, to hold on to a concept of the specificity of the film text and the cinematic apparatus" (163). Within this context, "feminism must stand opposed to all totalizing theory, grounded as such theory must be on hierarchy, exclusion and domination" (164).

Perhaps the most interesting question that Thornham raises is one which revolves around the validity of the field whose history she recounts. She draws attention to scholars such as philosopher Susan Bordo who argue for the need to retain the category "woman" as crucial to a politics of resistance. Thornham summarizes that feminism has been far more attentive to issues of difference than has been the white, male, Western intellectual tradition that it contests. "It [feminism] is less in danger from 'totalizing' tendencies than from a paralyzing anxiety about them" (166). Thornham herself in her final paragraph argues for the importance of a "politics of vision" to the development of feminist politics—suggesting that this politics of vision is the specific contribution of feminist film theory (171).

I find it difficult to resolve the problem of specificity and disciplinarity under the rubric of politics of vision. Certainly gender as a socially and culturally inscribed category retains its specificity. As socially inscribed, gender is historically determined, subject to change yet hardly in danger of extinction. Does the inauguration of a national women's basketball

league, for instance, mark the waning of gender as a social category, or does it signify the redefinition of these categories along different lines? The girls still "can't" play with the boys. Should they? Have we as feminist theorists, as feminist film theorists, created a league of our own? What might be the implications of this division?

Similarly, why have feminist film theorists set themselves apart from the traditional disciplines of philosophy and literature? We must also ask ourselves what was, is, the project of film theory, its specificity as a mode of inquiry. Perhaps the reason that as film theorists we keep poaching on other disciplines is because the importance of film lies in the way it stands in, metonymically, for culture as a whole. (It is worth noting that Thornham must devote as much space to literary scholar Janice Radway as she does to most film scholars.) "Cinema" is not a text, but an economic, cultural, social, and aesthetic institution that revolves around the production, distribution, and reception of a given set of texs. The complexity of cinema at any given moment presents an obvious and yet engaging challenge to any scholar, who must resort to methodological bricolage to answer his or her questions.

As theorists, we should perhaps take a lesson from cinema itself. Presented with television, cable, video, and a set of changing economic and social conditions, Hollywood adapted itself to a new mode of production and distribution. But what accounts for the persistence of Hollywood cinema as a body of texts through these various transformations? How do we as feminist film theorists respond to the fact that another generation of women has been introduced to Hollywood film by American Movie Classics? Or that the Hollywood film continues to address a specifically "feminine" audience through the "Romance" network? No doubt one day, we will no longer be able to speak of "cinema" with any authority, but it is not clear to me that we have, as yet, reached that moment.

Yet, as those of us who attempt to teach film know—speaking with authority about film is the sort of thing that keeps you on your toes. Students love and hate films; they have expectations that they rarely bring to other classes. Film Studies seem to refuse to become yet another docile scholarly pursuit, inciting inconvenient passions. This is perhaps both the strength and weakness of the area—but it is also a testimony to the vitality of the field and to its importance as a cultural intervention.

Hilary Radner teaches at Notre Dame University.

The Talkies

(Volume 4 of The History of American Cinema)

By Donald Crafton. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997. $85.00 cloth/Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999. $24.95 paper.

One sentence early on in *The Talkies* can sum up much of the striking nature of this brilliant addition to the Scribner multivolume history of American film: "The transition to sound cinema was not the paroxysm which the industry itself and popular writers describe, but it was a complicated and messy business, owing in no small part to the vicissitudes of mass audiences" (8). Arguing that the coming of sound was far from the revolutionary event that legend and the standard accounts in cinema history represent it as, Don Crafton's rich, powerful, and packed new book brings its own revolution to film historiography.

To be sure, there is already a tradition in the study of American film that seeks to emphasize the continuities in its history more than supposed radical breaks. Not for nothing was the research and writing of *The Talkies* conducted while Crafton was still a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (he is now at Notre Dame), for it is at Madison that there developed the strongest argument for understanding the sweep of Hollywood film as under the sway of a dominant mode of production. At Madison and in avowedly allied historiographic ventures—above all, Douglas Gomery's work at the University of Maryland on the business of the studios, especially in their exhibition practices—one very strong emphasis is on the ways the Hollywood system functions as system according to organized logics that absorb change and triumph over disruption.

While he shares in a business approach that recognizes the power of companies in making film history—and indeed while a very large part of *The Talkies* marvelously chronicles the year-by-year progress of each studio to come to grips with the coming of sound—Crafton revolutionizes standard approaches to sound in at least two other interrelated ways. To a history that focuses on the industrial logic of a mode of production, he adds both an attention to the everyday consumer culture that prepared the way for sound's acceptance and a concern for the theorization of the new forms of popular spectatorship and what they were able to make of the sound film. Arguing against the idea that capital logic alone makes history, Crafton pinpoints how, for the film industry, sound was an open adventure that could reach closure only in the complicated responses of potential consumers; as Crafton puts it, in a beautiful pun, "[T]he films of the period are more like tests than texts" (6). Not for nothing is the introduction to *The Talkies* entitled "The Uncertainty of Sound."

The first of Crafton's especial contributions to the rethinking of film history (his examination of sound's cultural context) takes up Part One of his book and is entitled "A New Era in Electrical Entertainment." In a stunning discussion, Crafton seems to move beyond film history per se to an analysis that belongs more broadly to intellectual history or to the history of ideas. The idea he delineates is the modern age's seduction by the aura of electricity, especially with the early twentieth century's fascination for what was then termed "thermionics"—the science of the production of electricity from filaments heated within vacuum tubes.

As Crafton shows, the thermionic idea(l) of progress through processes of electrical generation captivated everyday thought (for example, in popular magazine representations) and became a primary schema by which new technologies could attain public assent and ascent. In such a

league, for instance, mark the waning of gender as a social category, or does it signify the redefinition of these categories along different lines? The girls still "can't" play with the boys. Should they? Have we as feminist theorists, as feminist film theorists, created a league of our own? What might be the implications of this division?

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context, the coming of sound was often imagined less as a specifically cinematic accomplishment than as one having affinities with, or even deriving from, technologies of electrical transmission such as radio or the telephone. Crafton's specific take here on the coming of sound enables him to explain a number of concrete historical issues (to name just two: why particularly it was electrically oriented companies, like RCA or ATT, that were behind sound research; why one early format for the sound film—namely, the short song sketch—seems so like one widespread radio format of the time, and why therefore so many filmmakers gravitated toward this form, rather than full-fledged talkies, from the start).

Crafton's masterful delineation of the cultural-intellectual climate into which the sound film was inserted glides easily and logically into the second of his two major revolutions in the rethinking of film history. Here, Crafton sets out to examine public reception of the sound film and again, his analysis contributes not just to film history but to cultural studies more generally in its concern with the way ordinary consumers make use of their culture. If, in the first part of the book, Crafton's discussion of thermionics pinpoints conceptual preconditions for the reception of sound, it is the especial task of Part Three, entitled " Hearing the Audience," to theorize the specific responses the public might have had to the particular thermionic art of sound film presentation.

The conditional mood is important here, for Crafton recognizes that we cannot restore the original spectatorship of the time. But he suggests that from historical traces, we can make a very good guess at imagining the range of pertinent possible responses. Crafton looks at the film journals of the time—trade journals, but also studio-bound publications as well as "independent" fan magazines—as an especially rich source of these traces. In the popular press—even in its ostensible ephemera, such as letters to the editor—conceptions of sound are offered up and debated: what the ideal sound film should be; what the proper and improper uses of sound might be; how sound and story should go together (or not); which stars were destined to flourish (and which to perish) in the new world of the talkies. Crafton's careful excavation of the aesthetic presuppositions behind even the most seemingly anodine comments of the time is endlessly fascinating, endlessly educative.

And beyond its most striking virtues in rethinking the traditions of film history, *The Talkies* offers myriad other rewards to the reader. For instance, Part Two concentrates wisely on, as its title puts it, "Three Seasons: The Films of 1928–1931." In breathtaking fashion, Crafton details not only the construction of films themselves (and of the various production trends—for example, the cycles and genres—they belong to), but also the progresses and impasses of the various studios (including Poverty Row ones) as they worked to incorporate sound into their production schedules. Additionally, and admirably, this part of *The Talkies* also includes a subsection on film production, "Outside the Mainstream"—for example, ethnic and minority productions that tried to use sound, and the use (and misuse) of ethnic and minority identities within dominant studio representations. Once again, Crafton's specifically filmic concern complements that of today's cultural studies, concerned as they are to pinpoint conditions of emergence for alternative voices. In this respect, Crafton's own take on the cinematic possibility for such emergence with the coming of sound is explicit in its pragmatic pessimism: "These [ethnic and racial] and other voices faded after the mid-1920s. The saturation of American society by radio and the talkies undoubtedly had a leveling effect on the spread of ethnic sounds and images" (417).

The Talkies is quite simply a wonderful book. It takes its place among the very top works of American film history.

Dana Polan teaches at the University of Southern California.

Twentieth Century's Fox

Darryl F. Zanuck and the Culture of Hollywood

By George F. Custen. New York: Basic Books, 1997. $27.50.

In the last 15 years, film historians have recognized the film producer's central importance to the Hollywood studio system, suggesting that frequently, the best films were the result not just of world-class directors, but of collaborative efforts. Thus George F. Custen's new book does not, as he claims, offer the first study of a movie mogul that acknowledges his studio context; nor is his the first book to ask "What does a producer produce?" Still, after six often gossipy trade biographies, Custen's *Twentieth Century's Fox* is the first to acknowledge the studio system in which Zanuck worked. His is a welcome, extremely informative, and high-spirited look at Zanuck's career and accomplishments.

The book's verve—Custen surveys Zanuck's astonishing career in lively prose at the pace of a Zanuck production—arises from Custen's unabashed admiration for his subject: read as far as page 4, and you'll find Zanuck anointed "the greatest and most influential producer in the history of Hollywood and, by extension, one of the most powerful men in the United States" (4). Irving Thalberg comes close, but he was a hopeless Europhile and, anyway, he died young; Selznick was equally creative, but he never worked on Zanuck's studio-wide scale, nor did Samuel Goldwyn. Hal Wallis, Jack Warner, B.P. Schulberg, Harry Cohn—none of them compare.

There's no doubt that, among Hollywood's most creative studio heads, Zanuck lasted the longest. His personal investment in the minutiae of screenwriting, production, and editing is astounding. Whether working on 1941's backstage entertainment *The Great American Broadcast* or his own classy answer to *Gone with the Wind, How Green Was My Valley,* Zanuck was omnipresent, as a stroll through the Twentieth Century-Fox archives, or the papers of any creative personnel who worked there in the studio's heyday, reveals. He led script conferences to improve storylines, characterizations, and sequences of action, and he frequently dictated new scenes for the writers to fill out. His personal energy and acumen were expressed in his constant exhortation to make the scripts as concise as possible and to move the action along as quickly as possible. If the script didn't do it, Zanuck, who

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supervised postproduction equally closely, would recut the film accordingly.

Custen himself produces an extremely concise and rigorous survey of Zanuck's career, beginning with the backstory on this unloved, eighth-grade dropout from Wahoo, Nebraska, who finally succeeded in crashing early 1920s Hollywood as a gag writer and screenwriter for programmers. Custen pays unprecedented attention to Zanuck's earliest, highly overwritten prose efforts—short stories, a novel—which were harbingers of the producer's action-packed studio aesthetic at Warner Bros. and Twentieth-Century. Zanuck himself had an apparently limitless stash of story plots to churn out—once he broke in, no one could keep him down. His rise through the writing and corporate ranks at the paranoid, parvenu Warner Bros. lot began with Rin Tin Tin scripts, which allowed the studio to capitalize on that star and Zanuck's strengths: plots, not dialogue.

With time, Zanuck became a production executive deeply involved in many of Warner Bros.' most memorable films: he made major contributions to the early gangster films (*Doorway to Hell* and *Public Enemy* [both 1931]), the social problem movies (*I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* [1932]), *The Jazz Singer,* and the backstage musicals of Busby Berkeley.

After 1933 and the founding of Zanuck's semi-independent studio, Twentieth Century, the new mogul shifted from rocking the Depression-era boat, a change from "terrible honesty" to nostalgia (199). Zanuck turned to the prestige adaptation (*Les Miserables* [1935] is understood as *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* in costume) and the lavish biopic (such as 1934's *House of Rothschild*) to compete with the established firms. One fourth of his studio's scripts were set between 1865 and 1920, and these typically starred Shirley Temple, Don Ameche, Alice Faye, and Betty Grable. These films transformed "contested issues into placid memories" (224) by evoking the small-town life urban Americans had left behind.

Beyond his sheer productivity and unique skill at supervising an entire studio's output singlehandedly, this is what Custen demonstrates is distinctive about Zanuck: his production program. Zanuck rejected the Europhile respectability of his competitors (Selznick's Dickens adaptations, for example), and favored instead tabloid headline films that traded on urban energy and the sordid side of life that audiences read about in their newspapers (significantly, gossip columnist Walter Winchell is more important than any fellow producer for Custen's characterization of Zanuck's achievements). On the other hand, the studio's cheery entertainments flattered audiences anxious about modernity, urban life, and the other uncertainties of the present.

And Zanuck's lowbrow schedule, particularly the nostalgia films, provide Custen with an intriguing argument about the often neglected links between theater ownership and studio production. Fox's West Coast theater holdings meant that Fox films were previewed with audiences largely composed of Midwestern transplants like Zanuck himself. Even though all the studios relied upon the local population for reaction to their national releases, Custen claims that Zanuck understood these audiences better than the Jewish immigrant moguls, and calculated such films as *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1939) or *Mother Wore Tights* (1947) for maximum appeal; any reshaping of a Fox film after audience previews would further ensure this cinematic sensibility.

Befitting his interest in Zanuck's glory years, Custen wraps up his story quickly. He devotes just one chapter to Zanuck's achievements of the early 1950s and uses part of his epilogue to survey Zanuck's quixotic adventures in Europe in the 1950s, his epic production of *The Longest Day* (1961), and his triumphant return as head of production shortly thereafter. He was finally ousted in 1971, a cruel dismissal all too typical of Hollywood studio politics.

The pleasures of this book are considerable. We get capsule production histories of countless classic films, like *The Grapes of Wrath, How Green Was My Valley, Laura, Gentleman's Agreement, All About Eve,* and *Pinky,* as Custen draws on memoirs, previous biographies, production memos, and interviews with collaborators (Celeste Holm, Gregory Peck, Robert Wise, Peter Viertel, and Richard Zanuck, for example). There are some surprising revelations: we learn about Zanuck's intense disillusionment at Harry Truman's accusations of conflict of interest in Zanuck's supervision of training films for World War II; his (only recently discovered) insistence on hiring blacklisted writers for 50s films; his surprising uncertainty about Marilyn Monroe's talent and appeal; and even about an underappreciated "masterpiece": *Wait Until the Sun Shines, Nellie* (1952), a brooding melodrama of frustrated lives beginning at the turn of the century, which Custen sees as Zanuck's elegy to the studio era. And Custen's prose is always a pleasure to read.

That said, I found myself hesitant to accept some of Custen's grand claims for Zanuck. He argues that Zanuck shaped the "culture of Hollywood," i.e., the studio system's method of organizing production, its ideology of filmmaking, and its genres. In the realm of genres, Zanuck was an innovator: he broke the mold—and made often-copied new ones—especially with the biopic and the social problem film. Regarding the mode of production, Zanuck persisted as a central studio producer long after his competitors. This seems less a matter of shaping Hollywood's culture than of choosing an unpopular option for supervising studio work.

Hence *Twentieth Century's Fox* emerges as a producer-as-auteur study, with the studio system eventually fading into the background when Zanuck takes over the studio. This gives us more a sense of Zanuck standing astride the studio system than of a studio owner-manager striving within its confines. Still, Custen's goal is to make Zanuck as prominent and well remembered among film buffs and popular culture historians as the sainted Thalberg, the sentimental Mayer, the vulgar Cohn, and the neurotic Selznick, and he should achieve this aim. *Twentieth Century's Fox* is in every way an illuminating and entertaining look at another major figure from Hollywood's studio era.

Matthew Bernstein is the author of *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent,* which the University of Minnesota Press will publish in paperback next year.

White

By Richard Dyer. New York: Routledge, 1997. $69.95 cloth; $17.00 paper.

Richard Dyer's new book is a signal text in the history of Film Studies, one of those rare texts that forces the reader to reexamine all preconceived notions of race, gender, and identity in the cinema and substitute instead a continual questioning of the process of image production. This work is not entirely without precedent; Dyer has been focussing on the question of whiteness in the cinema at least since 1988, when his ground-breaking essay in the British film journal *Screen* (also entitled "White") first opened the topic to public debate. But the current text is a significant enlargement upon his previous work.

Drawing on a vast range of materials, from classical painting to nineteenth-century political cartoons and mid twentieth-century advertisements, carefully linked to discussions of such films as *Blade Runner, Falling Down,* the 1984 Granada Television serial "The Jewel in the Crown," Tarzan films, and mid-1960s Italian "peplum" (muscle-men) films, Dyer's text questions audience perceptions within the zone of created "whiteness" fashioned by these various cultural artifacts. He persuasively argues that the construction of whiteness is a pervasive and yet curiously evanescent phenomenon that functions to support numerous social and political inequities which often go unchallenged in our discussion of the impact that the cinema and its allied disciplines have on our collective consciousness.

What makes Dyer's text unique—and, indeed, one that should be assigned reading in every Film Studies course—is the way in which his amassed evidence demonstrates that a chain of racial stereotypes and prejudices have informed virtually the entire history of European art from the late Middle Ages to the present. Cinema is only the latest, and most omnipresent, representational medium continuing the dissemination of these artificially privileging and "othering" representational strategies. From the paintings of Whistler, Titian, and Joshua Reynolds to the covers of contemporary romance novels, from the outrageously racist political cartoons and drawings of Sir John Tenniel and Thomas Nast to constructions of whiteness in the films *Rocky* and *La Reine Margot,* and from a detailed examination of publicity photos of Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Princess Diana and Prince Charles juxtaposed with images of "Page Three" nude women from the British newspaper *The Sun,* Bogart and Bacall in *The Big Sleep,* Nazimova and Valentino in *Camille,* as well as cosmetic advertisements for "coloured girls" from *Ebony* in the 1970s, Dyer shows us images of an industry at work, an industry which seeks to perpetuate whiteness as the dominant normative range of figurative values at the expense of all other racial and cultural identities.

And yet, as Dyer usefully points out, whiteness itself is a curiously empty construct, one which needs to be perpetually reinforced through the reiteration of a series of pictorial representations that artificially ensure the continuance of a dominant white social power structure. Our European visual history from its inception to the present seeks to inculcate and justify a pattern of conscious, determined racism which all too often the viewer fails to recognize. What Dyer seeks to accomplish in *White* is to demonstrate how all other cultural systems have been elided at the expense of whiteness as a dominant social, political, cultural, and entertainment construct, and to show as well that this process continues unabated to the present day.

To mention but one among the many fine examples of the way in which Dyer illustrates his argument: There is a detailed examination of the ways in which film lighting in Hollywood and European films is geared entirely to presenting the best possible image of light-complexioned cast members at the expense of black actors. Dyer quotes Federico Fellini stating simply that "films are light" (85), and then demonstrates that for the entire history of the cinema, all standards of cinema lighting have been designed solely for Caucasian protagonists. As Dyer notes, as late as 1993, the *Focal Encyclopedia of Photography* admits that for purposes of demonstration, "it is assumed, unless stated otherwise, that the typical subject is a Caucasian with a skin reflectance of approximately 36%" (95). Ernest Dickerson, most famous for his work as director of cinematography on many of Spike Lee's films, recently wrote an essay, which Dyer quotes at length, on the numerous differences that a camera operator must take into account when filming black actors. Yet Dickerson's detailed instructions are generally ignored by Hollywood filmmakers. As Dyer convincingly demonstrates with a still from *Rising Sun* (1997), Wesley Snipes disappears alongside Harvey Keitel and Sean Connery when conventional Hollywood lighting strategies are employed.

Later in the text, in a discussion subheaded "Light Comes from Above" (116), Dyer demonstrates that traditional iconographic patterns of film lighting favor the use of back lighting and overhead light sources to suggest an ethereal quality of saintliness to both black and white subjects, illustrating this visual cliché with stills from Edison's version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903), as well as James Northcote's painting of Henry Fuseli (1778) and Julia Margaret Cameron's 1867 photograph of Sir John Herschell. As Dyer comments,

> The culture of light makes seeing by means and in terms of light central to the construction of the human image. Light is a defining term and means of the culture and how different groups relate to it profoundly affects their place in society. (121)

Within the context of this assertion, Dyer leads the reader through a series of banal yet profoundly disturbing images of commercial commodification. Images from *Foolish Wives* (1921) and *The Scarlet Letter* (1926) drive the point further home; what is always seen as most desirable in images of women is the glowing image of backlit, windswept hair and a face that radiates the soft glow of carefully constructed, ethereal lighting.

Chapter 4, "The White Man's Muscles," draws in part on Dyer's previous work in his book *Heavenly Bodies,* but

here his examination of the subject is enhanced by a scope and depth that goes far beyond the boundaries of his initial inquiry. Linking Tarzan, Conan the Barbarian, Rambo, and other images of pop-culture hypermasculinity to the mythic heroes (Hercules, Ulysses, Samson, Spartacus, and others) who populated the numerous Italian muscle-men films of the 1950s and 60s in which issues of race, gender, and social construction are paraded before the viewer in a manner that is simultaneously brash and revolutionary, these hastily executed and yet sensuously rich films (starring, for the most part, such American "star" body builders as Reeves, Reg Park, Mark Forrest and others) are effectively linked by Dyer to Italian Fascist popular culture of the late 1930s and 40s. As Dyer also points out, the frequent use of slave imagery in these films (set as they are in the phantasmal and synthetic era of Greek and/or Roman antiquity) once again calls into question the role of black and white protagonists within the context of popular cinema.

Chapter 5, "There's Nothing I Can Do! Nothing!," is a further dissection of the mechanics of colonialism, as exemplified by a detailed examination of numerous texts of colonial domination and exploitation, beginning with what Dyer describes as the urtext of works in this subgenre, E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India,* which, as Dyer notes, was "written in 1912–13, published in 1924, adapted for the stage in 1960, adapted for television in 1965, and made into a film in 1984" (184). Dyer traces *A Passage to India*'s influence on a wide variety of successive texts, literary and televisual, until he comes to "The Jewel in the Crown," a 14-part paean to British colonialism which Dyer subjects to intense scrutiny over more than 15 pages of concentrated cultural criticism. Deftly examining the Orientalist and racist structures underlying the work, Dyer demonstrates that these dreams of lost empire are an essential part of the continuing promulgation of whiteness as the preferred and dominant social construct in Britain today, and by extension, the rest of contemporary European culture.

When the reality of the present no longer suffices, one must escape to the past. Dyer persuasively argues that "The Jewel in the Crown," *A Passage to India*, *Out of Africa*, *The Rains of Ranchipur*, and numerous other ultra-colonialist, white supremacist *aides de memoire* are an integral part of contemporary television and cinema production because they represent an attempt to recapture the supposed scrutiny of an inequitable past. In a brief final chapter, "White Death," Dyer links this embrace of colonialist white domination to the recurring images of death prevalent in many of the films, paintings, texts, and advertisements he analyses. "I had not intended to write a chapter on whiteness as death," Dyer admits near the end of his book, "but it was a topic that kept coming back" (207). Indeed it does. The embrace of any system of social values that is so spectacularly inequitable and yet so fervently held by its adherents must inevitably end in rupture, decay, and collapse. In the closing pages of his book, then, Dyer draws all the strands of his discussion together in a concisely argued conclusion that equates racism with death and exposes the pursuit of the phantom construct of whiteness as an evanescent and unattainable cultural ideal.

This is a superb book, and, with its detailed notes, carefully planned index, and meticulous attention to detail throughout, a truly original and groundbreaking investigation into the social and cultural politics of racial construction which have informed American and European discourse from the fifteenth century forward. Erudite without being pedantic, written with quiet and unobtrusive authority, and graced with numerous illustrations in color and black-and-white, *White* is at once an essential volume and a call to further work in this long overlooked area of cultural and visual arts studies.

Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chair of the Film Studies Program at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His most recent book is *The Transparency of Spectacle* (State University of New York Press, 1998). Forthcoming is *Disaster and Memory: Celebrity Culture and the Crisis of Hollywood Cinema* (Columbia University Press).

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By Adrian Martin's measure, *Once Upon a Time in America* pares plot and indulges spectacle, merging disillusion with the epic. The gangster genre evokes Robert Warshaw's famous essay, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero," but De Niro's "Noodles" is more a dumb animal, a victim to his emotions. Martin's musical sophistication describes the movie's music track with special skill, and he artfully speculates on alternate interpretations of Leone's opium-den framing narrative. A political scientist at the University of California at Berkeley, Rogin views *Independence Day* in terms of World War II nostalgia, redemption through multi-ethnic collaborations that result in an old-time, successful war against a politically

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Letters to the Editor

Gina Marchetti's review of Matthew Bernstein's *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (*Film Quarterly,* vol. 52, no. 1) elicited this response from the author.

To the Editor and Readers of *Film Quarterly,*

As she slices and dices her way through *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, Gina Marchetti offers her prescription for assembling a classroom anthology on the topic: Cover all geographic regions imagined in Western fiction, documentary, and experimental film and video; include all prominent scholars who specialize in Asian Orientalism; cover the films of at least nine countries if you dare address national cinemas; include essays that analyze only the most popular narrative films; and be sure to cover the response of non-Western filmmakers.

This is a recipe not for a classroom anthology but a doorstop-encyclopedia. Marchetti condemns *Visions of the East,* which I co-edited with Gaylyn Studlar, for not serving as a smorgasbord of Orientalism in Film and Cultural Studies. This is absurd. We acknowledge via introduction, footnotes, and bibliography that many other texts exist on the topic (the volume references ten of the fifteen "usual suspects" whom Marchetti upbraids us for neglecting). We explicitly claim to include some of the best writing on the topic. But you would never know any of this from Marchetti's description. Our alleged failure to encompass a wide-ranging topic pales beside her inability to give a reasonably complete account of a single volume. Marchetti is entitled to her opinion; but authors, editors, and *Film Quarterly* readers are entitled to accurate and reasonable reviews. Marchetti's fails on both counts. Regarding accuracy, Marchetti misdescribes or ignores many aspects of *Visions of the East* on her way to dwelling on what's "missing." She claims we assembled material "not really germane to the topic." Did Marchetti skim parts of our book? The essay she dismisses on choreographer Jack Cole's Hollywood work explores gay camp sensibilities; presumably Marchetti considers the latter "not germane." She claims the book has "nothing on documentary"—this two lines after noting Dudley Andrew's discussion of Buñuel's *Land Without Bread.* So much for close reading. Marchetti writes: "two essays on *Pepe le Moko* seems like overkill." There is actually one illuminating essay on the film by Janice Morgan. Another, marvelous article by Charles O'Brien provides an overview of French colonialist cinema of the 1930s, using Michel de Certeau's analysis of travel literature. *Pepe le Moko* is only the first example here; if one reads the entire piece, one finds O'Brien discussing other popular French films that exemplify what he calls Orientalism's "ethnographic glance," and which blend documentary and fictional modes. And then there are the essays Marchetti does not mention, not even dismissively and in passing, as she does most of the volume's contents. Antonia Lant's brilliant survey of "Egyptomania" at the turn of the century embodies many of the virtues of the lonely three essays (by Ella Shohat, Marina Heung, and Phebe Chao) Marchetti singled out for praise (multi-media in range, multi-faceted in perspective); the same could be said for Mary Hamer's intriguing analysis of the postwar British *Caesar and Cleopatra* (which, like Chao's discussion of Wyler's *The Letter,* examines an ambivalent, international adaptation of a major writer's work). Then too, Marchetti's review uses unreasonable criteria for evaluation. She upbraids us for not including everything (all nationalities, film types, and all major scholars) any instructor could possibly use on the topic. But no one book can "do it all," and no sensible instructors expect one to. Teachers can assign other books on the topic alongside ours; they can ask students to test our authors' methods, or arguments, against these other works, or apply them to other films, such as *Casablanca,* which Marchetti so sorely misses.

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James L. Neibaur

Letters to the Editor

Gina Marchetti's review of Matthew Bernstein's *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (*Film Quarterly,* vol. 52, no. 1) elicited this response from the author.

To the Editor and Readers of *Film Quarterly,*

As she slices and dices her way through *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, Gina Marchetti offers her prescription for assembling a classroom anthology on the topic: Cover all geographic regions imagined in Western fiction, documentary, and experimental film and video; include all prominent scholars who specialize in Asian Orientalism; cover the films of at least nine countries if you dare address national cinemas; include essays that analyze only the most popular narrative films; and be sure to cover the response of non-Western filmmakers.

This is a recipe not for a classroom anthology but a doorstop-encyclopedia. Marchetti condemns *Visions of the East,* which I co-edited with Gaylyn Studlar, for not serving as a smorgasbord of Orientalism in Film and Cultural Studies. This is absurd. We acknowledge via introduction, footnotes, and bibliography that many other texts exist on the topic (the volume references ten of the fifteen "usual suspects" whom Marchetti upbraids us for neglecting). We explicitly claim to include some of the best writing on the topic. But you would never know any of this from Marchetti's description. Our alleged failure to encompass a wide-ranging topic pales beside her inability to give a reasonably complete account of a single volume. Marchetti is entitled to her opinion; but authors, editors, and *Film Quarterly* readers are entitled to accurate and reasonable reviews. Marchetti's fails on both counts. Regarding accuracy, Marchetti misdescribes or ignores many aspects of *Visions of the East* on her way to dwelling on what's "missing." She claims we assembled material "not really germane to the topic." Did Marchetti skim parts of our book? The essay she dismisses on choreographer Jack Cole's Hollywood work explores gay camp sensibilities; presumably Marchetti considers the latter "not germane." She claims the book has "nothing on documentary"—this two lines after noting Dudley Andrew's discussion of Buñuel's *Land Without Bread.* So much for close reading. Marchetti writes: "two essays on *Pepe le Moko* seems like overkill." There is actually one illuminating essay on the film by Janice Morgan. Another, marvelous article by Charles O'Brien provides an overview of French colonialist cinema of the 1930s, using Michel de Certeau's analysis of travel literature. *Pepe le Moko* is only the first example here; if one reads the entire piece, one finds O'Brien discussing other popular French films that exemplify what he calls Orientalism's "ethnographic glance," and which blend documentary and fictional modes. And then there are the essays Marchetti does not mention, not even dismissively and in passing, as she does most of the volume's contents. Antonia Lant's brilliant survey of "Egyptomania" at the turn of the century embodies many of the virtues of the lonely three essays (by Ella Shohat, Marina Heung, and Phebe Chao) Marchetti singled out for praise (multi-media in range, multi-faceted in perspective); the same could be said for Mary Hamer's intriguing analysis of the postwar British *Caesar and Cleopatra* (which, like Chao's discussion of Wyler's *The Letter,* examines an ambivalent, international adaptation of a major writer's work). Then too, Marchetti's review uses unreasonable criteria for evaluation. She upbraids us for not including everything (all nationalities, film types, and all major scholars) any instructor could possibly use on the topic. But no one book can "do it all," and no sensible instructors expect one to. Teachers can assign other books on the topic alongside ours; they can ask students to test our authors' methods, or arguments, against these other works, or apply them to other films, such as *Casablanca,* which Marchetti so sorely misses.

Moreover, Marchetti is inconsistent in her critique. She complains that we "strained to flesh out" our collection by reproducing "readily available" essays; yet among the three essays she singles out for high praise, two (those by Shohat

and Heung) are the most readily accessible pieces in the volume. She also berates the volume for lacking "important work by younger scholars"; McLean's and O'Brien's essays exemplify such work, but Marchetti won't acknowledge that. We're damned if we do and damned if we don't. There are many other points I could dispute in Marchetti's review, but I think it more concise to ask, Why does Marchetti employ such a scattershot, careless approach to reviewing our anthology? Is it because only a few essays undertake textual analysis along the lines of Marchetti's *Romance and the "Yellow Peril"* (two popular films per chapter)? That struck us as a monotonous option for an anthology, when work by "UNusual suspects" could explore, for example, filmic Orientalism's relationship to artistic movements in other art forms (dance, painting, theater), or its usefulness as political allegory. If Marchetti finds the films we discuss boring, what of our authors' methodologies? Marchetti doesn't bother to broach these issues; her primary complaint is that we have neglected the "embarrassment of riches" in essays that analyze films depicting the "East, Southeast, South and Central Asia and the Pacific"—the topic, not so coincidentally, of her own book. Yet even Marchetti acknowledges that we chose to follow closely Edward Said's original focus on North Africa and the Middle East. It's unusual, but skewed, for a reviewer to upbraid a text for hewing closely to an author's original concept. Besides, what is to be gained by being so territorial about geography and scholarship? Marchetti's book invokes Orientalism and Said on several occasions in analyzing Hollywood's portrayals of Asia(n)s in romantic melodramas; she never acknowledges that the term has ever had any application to North Africa. This puzzled me, but it did not inspire me to dismiss Marchetti's work as leading students and instructors into misreadings and intellectual confusion about Orientalism. I have more faith in readers.

I used to have more faith in book reviewers. I do not claim *Visions of the East* is irreproachable; but like any author/editor, I expected a full and reasonable evaluation of the work. Reviews like Marchetti's are a disservice to authors and editors, and to *Film Quarterly* readers as well. I invite them to consider *Visions of the East* on their own.

—Matthew Bernstein, Film Studies,
Emory University

Gina Marchetti responds.

To the Editor and Readers of *Film Quarterly*:

I stand by my original review of the anthology. I would also encourage *Film Quarterly* readers to look at the volume and make their own evaluations of its usefulness.

—Gina Marchetti, Department of Cinema
and Photography, Ithaca College

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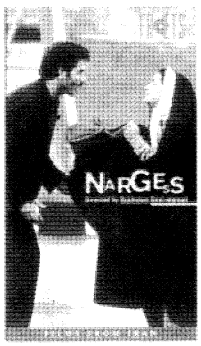
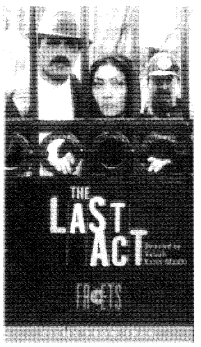
The Next Wave: New Films from Iran

"THE BREAKTHROUGH IN WORLD CINEMA." *The Economist*

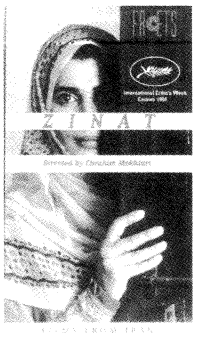


Nargess
A sharp-edged look at people who live outside the constraints of Islamic law. "Pushes the Iranian censorship code to the limit." (*Variety*)
Iran, 1992, 100 mins., Farsi with English subtitles.

Once Upon A Time, Cinema
A wonderful comedy set during the Qajar dynasty which is a condensed history of Iranian cinema and a love letter to the cinema in general.
Directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf *(Gabbeh.)*
Iran, 1992, 100 mins.
Farsi with English subtitles.

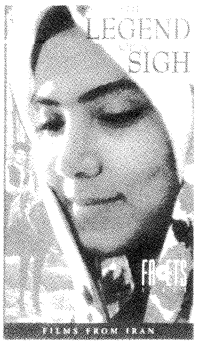


The Last Act
Award-winning debut feature from Karim-Masihi is an atmospheric mystery in which a sinister brother and sister plot to dispose of their recently widowed sister-in-law in order to obtain her inheritance.
Iran, 1991, 110 mins.
Farsi with English subtitles.



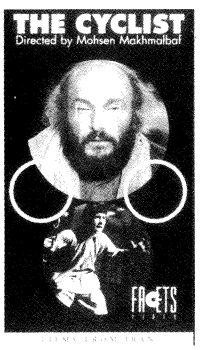
Zinat
Ebrahim Mokhtari's riveting drama about the attempts of Zinat, who runs a health clinic in a remote part of Southern Iran, to break free of the male-dominated rules and regulations that govern life in rural Iran.
Iran, 1994, 88 mins.
Farsi with English subtitles.

Travellers
Bahram Beyzai's *Travellers* is the story of a wedding ceremony which turns into a funeral wake when the bride's sister and her entire family are killed in a traffic accident.
Iran, 1992, 90 mins.
Farsi with English subtitles.

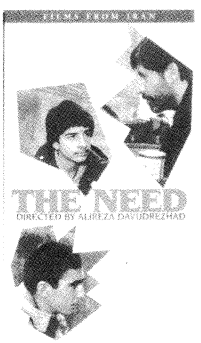


The Legend of a Sigh
Tahmineh Milani's feminist film depicts a woman novelist who experiences the lives of four women from different social strata. A fascinating portrait of a range of Iranian women and their problems.
Iran, 1991, 105 mins.
Farsi with English subtitles.

The Peddler
Three short tales set among the poor of Tehran in a shockingly forthright film by Mohsen Makmalbaf.
Farsi with English subtitles. VHS: S27787.

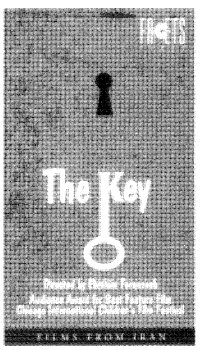


The Cyclist
Mohsen Makmalbaf's visually sophisticated film which deals with the themes of man's exploitation of man and the inequities between rich and poor.
Farsi with English subtitles. VHS: S27790.

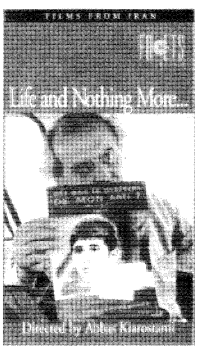


The Need
"A small, unforgettable masterpiece." (*Film Comment*). Two boys poised between childhood and manhood overcome rivalry to become friends.
Directed by Alireza Davudneshad.
Farsi with English subtitles. VHS: S27788.

Where is the Friend's Home?
Abbas Kiarostami's lyrical tale about a traveller searching for his friend's home who finds himself on an excursion through places and moments of great beauty and wonder.
Farsi with English subtitles. VHS: S27791.



The Key
Humor, pathos and suspense in Ebrahim Forouzesh's story of a four-year old and an infant left home alone. Screenplay by Abbas Kiarostami.
Farsi with English subtitles. VHS: S27789.



Life and Nothing More
Kiarostami's film investigates the aftermath of a devastating 1990 earthquake which killed some 50,000 people in northern Iran. "...the most beautiful and powerful Iranian film I've seen." (*Chicago Reader*).
Farsi with English subtitles. VHS: S27792.

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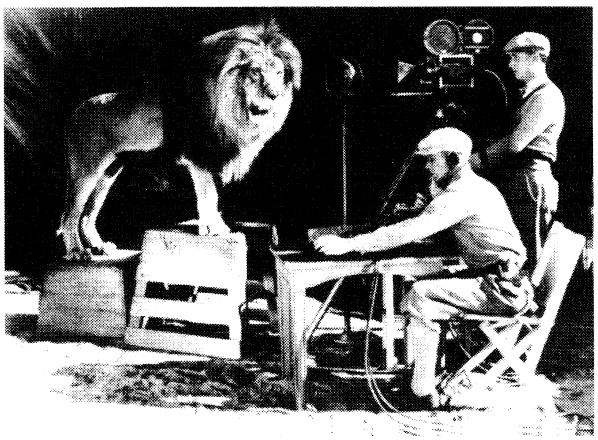

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